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# The Need for Media Education in Democratic Education

*Jeremy Stoddard*

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## **Abstract**

Despite the potential for media and technology to act as a democratizing force and the challenges to democracy posed by partisanship and the explosion of political media spending, media education and the preparation of active citizens in schools is virtually nonexistent. This essay presents the case for revitalizing media education for the age of digital media as a tenet of democratic education and outlines an agenda for teacher education, curriculum integration, student engagement, and research.

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**G**IVEN THE EVENTS of the past decade, it would be difficult to think about examples of global civic participation and populist political action without thinking about the role of new media. Despite the largely commercial intent behind most of the applications and websites that flood data through networks and the social media sites designed to generate user content and revenue, active citizens have found ways to use these same media toward goals of civic engagement and political action.

The role of media in politics is ubiquitous—in traditional news media and social media. This use of media toward new or convergent (Jenkins, 2006) forms of civic action is reflected in everything from the use of digital image editing and social media to raise social criticism (e.g., the meme of President Obama during the 2012 electoral campaign that read, “Sorry it took so long to get you a copy of my birth certificate . . . I was too busy killing Osama bin Laden”) to the use of Twitter and other social media to organize the Occupy and Arab Spring movements. These are examples of global civic engagement using media that reflect the ideals of an imagined digital democracy.

The concept of a free and democratic Internet, and its potential as a catalyst for global democracy, is the stuff of idealistic dreams. Many argue that those who have received the greatest benefits from the development of new media are not common

citizens or activists but those elites who have also converged to use new media to maintain their power (e.g., Hindman, 2008; Postman, 1992). News corporations, “super PACs” (political action committees), political organizations, and election campaigns have dominated the traffic on bandwidths more than have individuals or groups challenging authority or attempting to raise issues of global importance (Hindman, 2008).

Too often, the connection of servers and millions of miles of fiber-optic cables that are the hardware and guts of the Internet are viewed as neutral and free of control. This assumption of neutrality overlooks the many people and software (created by people) that are central to the creation, translation, and routing of information along these fibers or eventually through the air on satellite, Wi-Fi, or cellular networks. The people around the world accessing this network on their computers or mobile devices do not likely reflect on the expertise or viewpoints of people contributing to the information they are accessing. Nor do they consider how the

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design of the applications, databases, search algorithms, and web pages they engage with influences their understanding of the world—or what issues of privacy and security have emerged.

The use of digital media in the development of democratic movements outside of formal institutions has little to no relevance to the types of citizenship education happening in most K–12 schools in the United States. This means that the potential for using media and technology strategically to try to promote change toward democratic or social justice goals is being left outside the schoolhouse doors. The public school is supposed to be one of the institutions in American society that provides citizens with the tools and skills to take a more active role in their country. In the areas of citizenship education and the use of media, however, the goal is more often to maintain the status quo (Postman, 1992).

Most coursework related to citizenship, civics, or government focuses on relatively apolitical content such as the structures of government, the processes of legislation, and personal financial literacy education. It does not emphasize the type of issues-based curriculum and instruction that is the centerpiece of deliberative democratic education (Hess, 2009). And most civic education curricula and state standards do not incorporate media education skills or work to help students to understand the nature of media or the disciplinary uses of media in active citizenship.

In this article I make the case that the potential for new media to be a force for democratic citizenship is not being realized. This is in part because of the outdated, or often nonexistent, role of media education within the citizenship education curriculum and instruction that occurs in schools. Citizenship education has historically been problematic in schools as there is no consensus on what characteristics of citizenship are desired or what role schools should play in developing citizens. Further, models of citizenship education rarely include the types of critical literacy prominent in media education. Media education reached its peak in the 1980s and '90s as a result of the cultural studies and film studies movements in the United States and other Western countries. Although the core reason for media education—to examine the social, political, and economic effects of media and media messages—is still extremely relevant, it has not been incorporated into the citizenship curriculum. Further, as most of this content emerged historically in the English and cultural studies curricula and not in civic education, it is not as explicitly addressed within the context of contemporary politics, issues campaigns, and elections. Finally, the shift from media education to educational technologies has reinforced instead of challenged the persistent myth of technology as a neutral and progressive force in the world.

In the following section, I outline the challenges facing citizens and civic action in today's heavily mediated society, the current state of citizenship education and the role of media education in the curriculum, what it means to be a global citizen, and an initial model for rethinking the nature of media education and its role in training citizens. This model should serve as a starting point for teachers and curriculum leaders, policymakers, and researchers. If the potential for digital democracy and global citizenship is to be met, young citizens need to be engaged in

understanding the nature of media, its role in civic action and politics, and how to use media to access and evaluate information from divergent perspectives, to effectively communicate and persuade others using different media forms, and to take meaningful action.

## **Is Society More Democratic in the 21st Century?**

Given the increased access to information and abilities to communicate, the first issue to examine is whether or not the digital media and networks of the 21st century have led to a more democratic society. There is evidence that they have not. Hindman (2008) argues that despite the potential for broadened political discourse and the ability of marginalized groups to have a greater voice, the reality is that the vast amount of media traffic is still controlled by the political and media elite. This is not to say that marginalized voices are not present over the myriad of websites, blogs, Twitter feeds, and other social media sources and news streams, but the number of visitors to these sites represents a very small proportion of web users. The bulk of Internet users instead are visiting news sources controlled by, and thus accessing the information provided by, the global elite (Hindman, 2008).

There have also been, of course, radical changes in the digital age in the way politicians and individual citizens can mobilize support, transmit information, raise funds, and organize, but this is more limited than is commonly perceived (Loader & Mercea, 2012). This transformation has not necessarily given the public a larger voice or lessened the impact of corporate messages, as websites and media being used to voice populist political messages are getting very little attention.

The impact of media on politics, and in particular on the ability of political and economic elites to control political messages, has only grown since the 2009 Citizens United U.S. Supreme Court ruling that allows unlimited and virtually anonymous money to be given to super PAC organizations. The impact of these super PACs is up for debate, as many of the largest organizations on the conservative end of the political spectrum did not get much return on their donors' investments during the 2012 presidential election (Tumulty, 2012). However, that election as well as recent Senate, House, and even state-level elections have been the most expensive in history by wide margins (Confessore & Bidgood, 2012). Therefore, the need for a media-savvy society is more important to our democracy than ever. This means that citizens need to both understand the nature and power of political messages in media and be able to take advantage of new media and participatory culture in order to take action.

## **Media, Politics, and Society**

A secondary issue, evident in the United States in particular, is the way that new media have served as a catalyst for the growing partisan divide in the citizenry. As a result of being able to control which news sources and media they access, citizens are no longer being exposed to the same type of broad-spectrum coverage that a trip to the newsstand would provide (Sunstein, 2007). In this way, the advent of new media may be contributing to a less democratic society, especially when the narrowing political

perspectives are combined with lessening social and civic engagement among people from different economic classes or with different political, social, and religious views (Bishop, 2008; Putnam & Campbell, 2010).

Not only are citizens more likely to engage solely with views that already reflect their own, they are also likely to live in communities that also reflect these views (Bishop, 2008). According to Bishop, more people today are living near others who share similar backgrounds and views on politics, religion, and social issues as a result of racial desegregation and White flight, the development of gated and elite neighborhoods, and political gerrymandering.

The effects of this political, social, and class segregation mean that people are not being exposed to different political or social views and are not being engaged in discussions with people with divergent backgrounds. Elites' control of the information and perspectives that an individual will physically and virtually encounter during the day may in part foster the type of extreme political partisanship illustrated in the past five years in state elections and ballot initiatives, in Congress, and in the last two presidential elections (Sunstein, 2009). This is what Pariser (2011) refers to as the filter bubble—in essence, a system of algorithms built into search engines and social media that hone each individual's news feeds to fit unique preferences and thus control the news encountered.

Of course, this overview of American society does not fully explain the nature of youth civic engagement. Numerous studies have illustrated the nature and ability of young people to avoid the partisan trappings of older generations and find ways to engage—now using new media to communicate with others as close as next door or as far as all the way on the other side of the globe. In particular, youth are using the web and social media to form or join grassroots organizations and focus on local issues or issues related to identity politics in particular (Banaji, Buckingham, van Zoonen, & Hirzalla, 2009).

Similarly, work conducted by organizations such as the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE) and the MacArthur Foundation's Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics has identified the numerous ways in which young people engage civically and participate in politics online or using new media (e.g., Bennett, 2008; Cohen & Kahne, 2012). These studies show that young people are engaged in civic behaviors via social media, such as forwarding or otherwise sharing political cartoons or other messages from political organizations, posting to a discussion forum of a political organization or a news site, or joining a political group online. However, they are not as confident in judging the trustworthiness of sources or in recognizing political messages in less explicit media forms. Unfortunately, the development of skills and knowledge that take advantage of new media to engage in citizenship activities is extremely limited in the current standardized academic context in education (e.g., Au, 2007; Levine, Lopez, & Marcelo, 2008). These skills could include the development of the types of critical literacy deemed lacking or the ability to craft political messages using new media to create a campaign to advocate for a local issue.

## The Current State of Citizenship Education in the Curriculum

Most state standards for civic or government education in the United States do not emphasize the attributes of active global citizens, much less the ways in which media can be used toward democratic goals. With some exceptions, such as the Washington State Social Studies Learning Standards (2008), civics or government courses focus primarily on the structures of government, the role of the individual in the economy, or individual rights. These courses do not reflect the skills and knowledge needed to be able to take action within or to challenge the dominant institutions and hierarchies. This narrow curricular focus is a result of a lack of consensus as to what kind of citizen is desired, the desire to keep standards apolitical, and the desire to align standards with assessments measurable by standardized tests. Most standards in this content area do not even emphasize the types of issues-based or deliberative democratic pedagogies that are useful both for meeting academic ends and for developing thoughtful citizens (Hess, 2009; Parker, 2003). There is often no mention of media beyond a very narrow discussion of election advertising.

National organizations such as the National Council for the Social Studies have set forth standards that promote a greater inclusion of active citizenship themes: a desire to have students understand concepts such as “social justice, liberty, equality” and to be able to “participate in the process of persuading, compromising, debating, and negotiating” or “collaborating with others to take civic action” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2010, p. 158). *The Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools* report (Gould, 2011) is even more specific in identifying six practices for promoting civic learning and engagement: coursework focused on civic-related topics (e.g., government, law), discussion of current and controversial issues, service-learning aligning knowledge with practice, extracurricular activities, student participation in school governance, and simulations of democratic processes. These practices promote particular skills and knowledge but do not emphasize the global nature of citizenship Banks (2008) describes or examine the training of citizens for the 21st century.

These national standards established by organizations, unlike their state counterparts, are not assessed formally unless also adopted in some form by state education departments or local school districts. Unless supported in some meaningful way, these state and national standards should not be viewed as the de facto curriculum; unfortunately, the national standards more clearly outline the necessary skills, knowledge, and views necessary for global citizenship than what is actually occurring in most classrooms, and in particular classrooms that serve lower socioeconomic students (Ladson-Billings, 2005). According to Ladson-Billings (2005), these students often experience “limited and shallow textbook content” (p. 71), a lack of attention to global or controversial issues, and little focus on citizen rights or training in skills related to active citizenship.

The lack of dynamism in citizenship curricula is not solely a U.S. issue. The new *Citizenship: Programme of Study*, the curriculum standards issued by the U.K. Department of Education for their standard course of study (2013), places only slightly more

emphasis on skills and knowledge related to a more participatory or global type of citizenship. Active participation is generally conceived of as volunteering and being active within the existing structures of government rather than working to transform them. For example, the program of study states that students should be taught about “the different ways in which a citizen can contribute to the improvement of their community, to include the opportunity to participate actively in community volunteering” (p. 5). Further, volunteering, voting, and actions of the participatory citizen are placed at the same importance as financial literacy. Unfortunately, this new Programme of Study, which was developed by the current conservative government, eliminated a more active conception of citizenship present in the 2007 version; the previous version also included a sophisticated focus on media education within civics. It included standards focused on student engagement in the active analysis and use of media as part of being a citizen.

### **Media Education vs. Educational Technologies in the Schools**

Because young people are now filters for millions of bits of information on a daily basis as a result of engaging the world online, the argument is often that these new generations are digital natives and are tech savvy or information literate. It may be true that young people are crafty consumers of information and find it more natural to interact virtually than in person, but this does not mean that young people understand the media they engage with or what those media represent.

Media education emphasis is placed on a narrow view of literacy and the integration of technologies in teaching, approaches used toward goals dictated more by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) standardized curriculum (and now Common Core Standards) than by a comprehensive set of goals. Such outdated notions of literacy and the technology-as-tool metaphor will not prepare young citizens for their role in society in the 21st century. Instead, media education should emphasize critical literacy and the use of media to engage in authentic learning experiences with others, construct knowledge, and communicate effectively (Buckingham, 2000; Gee, 2013; Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012). The National Council for the Social Studies, for example, has two separate mission statements, one for media literacy (2009) and one for technology (2013). There are many parallel ideas in these two statements, and both profess the need for using media literacy or technology to work toward the goal of participatory democracy. However, the media literacy statement, because it is informed by various perspectives on media (e.g., criticism, participatory culture, new literacy), remains incoherent while the more recent technology statement puts the integration of technologies and use of technologies for learning alongside goals for critically analyzing these media. In the end, as neither policy has real implications in terms of state or national curriculum, they are at best tools for informing local and state level discussions. The new C3 Framework, the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework, is an inquiry-based curriculum framework for social studies education that so far is the closest to

Common Core Standards in the field, and it has little to no mention of media or the need for media education.

Historically, the strongest media education curricula globally are those in the United Kingdom and Australia and emerged from the media education and cultural studies movements that started in the 1960s and peaked in the 1980s and 1990s. These curricula are also strongly grounded in the English curriculum or a separate Media Studies course for the secondary school, as they emerged as part of a grassroots movement led by English teachers. The emphasis on media use includes critical analysis of media texts and using media to communicate as part of a participatory culture. Unlike the curriculum outlined in *The Civic Mission of Schools* (Gould, 2011), the 2007 Citizenship Programme of Study (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007) placed an emphasis on the role of media and technology in citizenship education:

*This includes broadcast media, print media and ICT [Information and Communications Technologies] as a means of disseminating information. Students should examine the extent to which the media reflect, distort and create opinion; the use that politicians make of the media in communicating with the public; and the use of the media by other groups wishing to influence public opinion and those in power. (p. 47)*

There is also a stronger emphasis in the United Kingdom and Australia on media production and communication in citizenship education in addition to critical consumption, but the primary emphasis is on literacy:

*This includes: using different media and ICT to communicate ideas, raise awareness, lobby or campaign on issues; using and interpreting a wide range of sources of information during the course of enquiries and research; and learning how different media inform and shape opinion. Students need to evaluate the extent to which a balanced or partial view of events and issues is presented. (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007, p. 48)*

Unfortunately, as mentioned above, the new 2013 National Curriculum's Programme of Study for citizenship in the United Kingdom eliminated mention of ICT or media literacy.

In the United States, the focus on media production as part of the curriculum generally falls under the heading of educational technologies, as the NCSS technology position statement (2013) illustrates. The integration of technology in the classroom and in teacher education programs often does include a focus on production of media but does not include the critical analysis component, other than perhaps some discussion on information literacy when doing research with web browsers and websites. For teachers, the emphasis on integrating educational technologies is not generally transformative. Instead, it most often results in adapting the technology for current teaching practices (Cuban, 2001; DeWitt, 2007). The reliance on technologies, and by default on the educational technology companies and corporate interests that



propagate this reliance, means there is a desire to maintain a view of technology as a neutral tool for raising student achievement.

#### THE TECHNOLOGY-AS-TOOL FALLACY

New technologies have been viewed as the great equalizer in education since the beginning of the 20th century (Cuban, 1986). Technology companies have sold school systems for more than a century on the belief that new technologies are the answer to raising achievement scores or graduation rates and will make up for societal inequalities and the opportunity gap. For example, one local school system I work in recently installed small amplifiers in the ceiling of every classroom and armed teachers with lavalier microphones because the company selling the equipment cited research saying that these sound systems lead to higher test scores. Educational film, radio, television, distance learning video networks, the Internet, electronic textbooks, and now social media, video games, and mobile technologies have all been viewed as the next great panacea for learning (Cuban, 1986, 2001).

These technologies were all viewed as innovations that would provide equal access to learning and make up for the giant gap in income across the United States and between the so-called developed and developing worlds. None of these new technologies, however, have provided the giant leap of achievement and learning that was promised, despite the amount of money allocated to fund them instead of to hire additional high-quality teachers, reduce class sizes, or any of a number of other actions thought to be more effective at reducing the opportunity and achievement gaps (Margolis, 2008). As a result, the use of technologies often does more to maintain the status quo than to erase it (DeWitt, 2007). This is not solely a result of the technology, however, but the way in which it is being used in teaching and learning, the context of schools and schooling in society, and a reflection of the shifts in society itself.

#### THE LIMITS OF A LITERACY APPROACH

The best examples of media education in the United States similar to those in the United Kingdom and other nations emerged in the English or literature curriculum areas. As a result, the focus in state curriculum standards is often on a literary or literacy approach to understanding how media such as film reflect particular meanings. This curriculum often includes some aspect of critical analysis of “the media” (as in, television news), advertising, or even specific topics such as propaganda in history classes. The effectiveness of this critical literary or media literacy approach is threatened by the very narrow definition and assessment of literacy as a result of NCLB. The development of skills and knowledge related to critical media literacy (e.g., Kellner, 2009; Kellner & Share, 2007) or practices associated with the wave of new literacies that are being studied largely in academic circles (e.g., Gee, 2007) is often ignored.

Instead of being transformational, the literacy practices seen most often in today’s classrooms, in social studies in particular, are associated with text-based literacy and traditional pedagogies adapted to new media. Since the social studies were not included as a mandated testing subject in NCLB, this subject area has been marginalized in the lower grades in many states or used to teach the

types of literacy required to meet annual yearly progress assessments required by NCLB. The new Common Core State Standards (2010) likewise include literacy standards for the social studies, but emphasize those more fitting for a field like history than for active citizenship. Even the most complex of these standards related to media emphasize the reading of a text versus using media to construct, communicate, collaborate, or persuade: “Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem” (p. 61).

The emphasis of inquiry and interpretation in this standard stop at the reading of a text, even if media based, and does not consider the nature of the text and the context of its production or using media for more active forms of citizenship. These Common Core Standards are most meaningful for the teaching of history, which is also the subject that dominates the social studies in the United States and serves as a core subject in most countries with an Anglo-style curricula. It is worth noting that compared to some state standards that consist of a laundry list of historical facts (e.g., Virginia’s Standards of Learning), the literacy standards in the Common Core place a much greater emphasis on disciplinary-based reading and writing.

My critique here is not of the conceptualization of potential for fields such as new literacies or the theoretical models of teaching critical literacy but of the ways in which media literacy and literacy practices currently exist in schools. Further, even the best conceptions of critical media literacy or new literacies are often not being taken seriously in the curriculum in part because the role that media plays in shaping society and how the world is viewed is not taken seriously (e.g., Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012; Kellner, 2009). Instead, media studies and media education are often pushed to the margins and not viewed as a serious academic enterprise—viewed instead as pop culture (Buckingham, 2009). One way to incorporate media education more meaningfully, and in a way that also addresses the goals of democratic citizenship, is to incorporate media education principles as a core tenet of democratic education.

#### WHAT DOES EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP LOOK LIKE?

As I identified in the beginning of this essay, one of the major challenges in examining the relationship between citizenship and digital democracy is forming a consensus as to what it means to be a democratic citizen. Generally, there is an attempt to define *citizenship* through a framework of knowledge, skills, and dispositions (e.g., Gould, 2011). Knowledge can include understanding the structure of governments and international treaties or the history of human rights. Skills may include the ability to analyze and weigh evidence, answer complex problems, or communicate persuasively. Dispositions, often the most controversial, may to some mean the desire to vote, volunteer, or reflect good moral character. Others may envision the dispositions of a citizen to include goals of social justice and the role of citizens to actively work for equality in their communities or even act in civil disobedience to laws or actions they find unjust.

In order to be an effective citizen today, one must not limit citizenship to that of the nation-state. Given the nature of the global economy and ease in covering great distance using new media and networks, people in the current generation must be engaged as global citizens and prepared to consider a more diverse range of perspectives and issues than those of their parents and grandparents. The notion of global citizen reflects not just the role of the individual in the world but also the changing nature of the nation-state as populations become more global. According to Banks (2008), the dispositions of global citizens in multicultural societies include a sense of cosmopolitanism where individuals

*view themselves as citizens of the world who will make decisions and take actions in the global interests that will benefit humankind. . . . Cosmopolitans identify with peoples from diverse cultures throughout the world . . . [and] are ready to broaden the definition of public, extend their loyalty beyond ethnic and national boundaries, and engage with difference far and near. (p. 134)*

Banks does not argue that citizens should lack an allegiance to a national identity or a role as a national citizen but that they should be able to engage with others from around the world, make efforts to understand global perspectives, and consider the global consequences of decisions in addition to the personal, local, and national consequences. Similarly, Thornton (2005) states “although educating for internationalism often seeks to eliminate exploitation, militarism, and national vainglory it is nonetheless reconcilable with a reasoned loyalty to a nation-state” (p. 82). Therefore, one of the goals in developing global citizens is that they understand the value in attempting to consider issues from global perspectives as well as national viewpoints.

When we attempt to identify the specific characteristics, including the knowledge, skills, and dispositions, of this kind of citizen, they would likely include: (a) the ability to examine problems and issues from multiple perspectives, find and weigh evidence, and deliberate and come to reasoned conclusions (Hess, 2009; Parker, 2003); (b) the ability to take actions not only as a participatory citizen but one who is justice oriented to work for the common good globally and locally (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004); and (c) the knowledge of the workings of government and power from the local to the global and an understanding that a citizen’s role is to continually seek out knowledge and recognize the constructed and often contested nature of knowledge (Gould, 2011). All of these characteristics require that citizens understand the nature of media and information they engage with, the ability to use media to communicate and persuade others, and the most effective ways to organize and take action.

### **Media Education as Part of Global Democratic Citizenship Education**

What would the integration of media education into democratic education look like in the schools, curriculum, and teacher education? How can media help to foster aspects of citizenship and understandings needed for a global society? Further, what research needs to be done to fully understand how best to prepare active

global citizens for our new-media world? There are three interrelated aspects of media education that I pose as being central to strengthening democratic education for global citizenship: the need for a fundamental understanding of the nature of media, the use of simulations of democratic processes and practices, and the explicit development of media education skills for strong democratic citizenship. In the end, it may be that we need to rethink the nature of our citizenship education programs and the vision for global democratic citizens who can best meet the challenges of the 21st century—a model of citizenship education centered around participatory and strong democracy in a mediated society.

#### **UNDERSTANDING MEDIA**

I have made the case here that separate courses in technology and media literacy or the incorporation of media literacy into the English or literature curriculum are not meeting the needs of citizenship education. This does not mean that the underlying frameworks from these curricula need to go out with the proverbial bathwater. The most important lesson that can be drawn from earlier renditions from media education, or what Hoehsmann and Poyntz (2012) refer to as Media Literacy 1.0, is the need to help teachers and students to form an understanding of the nature of media.

Put differently, in order to develop a more critical viewpoint on information and technologies, one must first have a basic epistemological view of media representations as constructed and their delivery technologies as designed for particular purposes and not as neutral tools. This includes all forms of mediated information: visual media such as films, video, and video games; various textual sources of media including socially constructed wikis, blogs, and discussion forums; data-driven sites that present data in visual or even interactive ways; and social media that contain all of these media forms. All of these media forms represent data using symbol systems that reflect particular histories and social and cultural viewpoints and hold power. Understanding of the nature of media prepares teachers and students to be able to recognize that the media they engage with reflect particular viewpoints constructed within a particular context. This means that the analysis of media needs to go beyond the diegesis, or “content” of the media, to also examine the context of its production and dissemination and perspectives of its authors. Further, concepts from political communications that explain how media messages are used to prime and frame messages—and the thinking and discussions they promote—may be helpful in understanding the nature of media communication.

The goal of understanding the nature of media is twofold. First, critical scholars views that media representations hold power and most often work to recreate social and political hierarchies is still relevant today, as Hindman’s (2008) work illustrates. Therefore, it is important to develop student citizens who critically analyze the information they consume and reflect upon how the technologies they use shape how they may be accessing information and how they view the world. This understanding is particularly necessary for global citizenship as the issues of power are exacerbated by the barriers between countries and peoples

identified as “developed” versus “developing” and the role of media in countries where it is used to control populations or used to define the relations between nations. However, as Ellsworth (1989) eloquently noted, critical pedagogy can be highly impractical.

Therefore, there is a second pragmatic goal for understanding the nature of media representations. In order to use media effectively toward democratic goals, students must understand how media are constructed to evoke emotion, persuade an audience, and connect with others. Most important, a focus on media understanding versus the use of technologies as tools is advantageous. Once students have a fundamental understanding of the nature of media, they can continue to apply that understanding even as media forms converge and evolve or the delivery technologies change.

There are many activities that can be done to help students build these reflexive habits: reverse-storyboarding political advertisements, comparing and contrasting global newspaper headlines on political issues or films from different periods that represent the same event or topic, producing a video or video game and reflecting on all of the decisions made to construct it. There are also basic critical media literacy skills that come from understanding media production and heuristic lessons that may be helpful to form this understanding, such as how camera angles are used to evoke particular emotions and identities, how racial and gender stereotypes have developed over time, or how search engines function to produce results. The understanding of the nature of media and the power of media in global politics provides a foundation to develop further comprehension of democratic processes and practices and the explicit skills necessary to effectively engage as a global citizen.

#### SIMULATING DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

The one section of *The Civic Mission of Schools* (Gould, 2011) report that includes a specific mention of the use of media is the “proven practice” they identify as “simulations of democratic processes” (p. 34). In the report, simulations are presented as motivating and as models in which students can practice skills and apply their civic knowledge. Although simulations in different forms have been used in social studies classes for decades, the number of video games and digital simulations related to civic education has expanded greatly over the past decade. Any motivation that these games provide may be the result of the authenticity of the experience and the ability of students to engage in realistic issues or problems with fellow students more than that students are engaged in a game or mediated simulation. After all, the games created for educational use generally do not rival the production quality or game design of their commercial counterparts.

The real value, alluded to in *The Civic Mission of Schools* (2011) report but not fully explored, is the ability to engage students in developing the epistemologies of practice of disciplines or positions related to active citizenship. Shaffer (2006), in his studies of the use of games for learning, focuses on how games can be used as models for learning to engage students in professional practices of different disciplines. For example, how better to learn how to use evidence to take a position and attempt to persuade others of your position’s

warrant than to work from the role of a member of Congress or community activist? If you want to learn about global political, social, or environmental issues impacting a particular part of the world, why not engage in those situations from the role of an aid worker, journalist, local activist, or diplomat? Being placed in these roles and having to engage in different situations can help students learn about contemporary issues, learn about the relationships between different countries or groups of people around the globe, and learn the tools, practices, and goals of different relevant perspectives.

Other games and simulations have been developed to simulate civic action on a more local level. Two games developed by Squire and his colleagues, *Greenbush* and *Dow Day*, attempt to leverage the gaming model to local history and civic engagement. *Greenbush* is an augmented reality game developed in large part by students that engages middle school students in learning about their local community as they explore the neighborhood physically and virtually using mobile devices. As they explore the Madison, Wisconsin, Greenbush neighborhood, they are able to access relevant images, documents, and information about the history of and events that occurred in their community. The students who designed this game and conducted the historical inquiry on the neighborhood worked to establish a Greenbush Day in Madison to celebrate the historical significance of the neighborhood (<http://csumc.wisc.edu/cmct/greenbush/index.htm>).

The same augmented reality game development group (ARIS) developed another place-based game that helped students explore the historic Dow Chemical lab bombing on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus during the Vietnam War (<http://arisgames.org/featured/dow-day/>). These situational, local, and augmented reality games are poignant for students learning how to engage locally and may be particularly useful for encouraging younger students to take a more active civic action stance. Simulations can be a place where developing citizens learn and practice civic action and develop civic knowledge. Of course, as Raphael, Bachen, Lynn, Baldwin-Philippi, and McKee (2010) remind, it is still important to ask students to reflect on how the game was designed to engage them from a particular perspective and to look at the context of who made the game and its goals—reinforcing the importance of always thinking about the nature of media, how it is constructed, and to what end.

#### DEVELOPING THE SKILLS OF GLOBAL CITIZENS

Simulations can help students to learn and practice skills that are important to taking effective action as a global citizen. It is important to follow playing games or participating in simulations with an examination of what was learned and how the skills and knowledge gained might be used outside of the simulated world. These include how to access, analyze, and use evidence to persuade others; how to discuss and deliberate controversial public issues; and how to participate as a citizen, from voting to taking action through civil disobedience or collective action (Gould, 2011; Hess, 2009; Parker, 2003). Many of these skills emerge from the types of literacy work identified in the Common Core Standards included above. However, these standards more accurately reflect the types of



disciplinary literacy associated with literary or historical work and not those of a citizen. What, then, are important areas from media education that align with the goals of global citizenship? Once students gain a fundamental understanding of the nature of media and how media are used within the different disciplines or epistemologies of practice associated with politics or civic action, they can apply these lessons using different media forms and techniques.

In order to be informed citizens, students need to learn how to seek out, access, and analyze different types of information using media. They need to know how to use databases, computational media for using and analyzing data, and media tools to help to organize and capture information. They also need to engage in communication and deliberation with others, ideally around the globe. Therefore, they need to understand how to use communications technologies as well as how to apply their understanding of media and their desire to understand issues from different perspectives. In addition to media that allow for direct communication with others using text, video, or audio, fundamental skills of clear communication through writing or visual means are also vital. This means formal skills in being able to use different forms of evidence to persuade others are as relevant today as they were when the primary delivery technology was written correspondence.

Finally, specific techniques gleaned from understanding contemporary practices of political and civic action can be honed. These include using techniques in social media to create networks of like-minded citizens as well as using specific media forms such as editorials, blogs, tweets, and media-generated flash mobs to reach and persuade people. They can also study election or issue-based campaigns to identify strategies used. For example, the architects of the recent campaign in the state of Minnesota against a traditional marriage amendment used their understanding of the people of the state to persuade them to vote down the amendment. They were successful because they were able to appeal to the religious, civic, and social beliefs of the majority of the population through local television and radio advertisements and interviews and collaborate with sympathetic groups as a result of get-out-the-vote networking and ground campaigns. Examining cases of civic action in practice and identifying and practicing the skills necessary to be effective in these cases are important steps to becoming a global citizen—as important as having a cosmopolitan view of the world or the desire to help to take action in a local community or on an international issue.

### **Making Media Education Core to Democratic Education**

The three applications of media education in democratic education are not intended to be fully inclusive of how these two areas are intertwined or complementary. Instead, they are intended to start a conversation about how media education may be more effectively integrated into disciplines such as democratic education—where there is an added value to applying disciplinary and specific concepts of media and actions with media.

I would be wrong to not point out the obvious—that all of the activities above would be worthless without a well-trained teacher or facilitator to lead them. Media education and citizenship education are complex content areas that require deep thinking and reflection. Teachers need to provide the kind of open classroom climate, willingness to engage students in controversial issues, and confidence to let students explore their own political and civic identities in which these types of strategies might work (McAvoy & Hess, 2013). In order to make this possible, teacher education programs must incorporate democratic pedagogy and media education more explicitly in their programs.

In addition to teachers, school leaders need to be willing to revisit media policies to allow such activities to be supported, and state policymakers need to take the political and moral imperative to construct state standards and curricula that emphasize a model of active global citizenship, and they all need trust that students will be encouraged to find their own place on the political spectrum and that the knowledge, skills, and dispositions described above are applicable regardless of political identity.

Finally, researchers must continue to explore the implications for media education within democratic education. They also must examine how media can be integrated into different educational contexts. Many of the studies cited in this paper are from research done outside of the typical school schedule and setting. One question is, how can simulations, critical media literacy, and democratic pedagogies reach students in the poorest and least well-equipped schools? After all, these are the students who most need access to high-quality curriculum and instruction. They are also exactly the young citizens we want to equip to take civic action locally and globally.

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