Inspiring Engagement:
An analysis of youth preferences and uses of civic websites

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Abstract

This thesis uses an online questionnaire in conjunction with focus groups to explore young people's preferences and uses of websites designed to encourage civic engagement. Popular and academic literature has suggested that young people are growing increasingly apathetic and disinterested in politics. Emerging research has suggested that young people do not find traditional political institutions meet their needs. Some scholars have argued that new media technologies, particularly the Internet, have a role to play in giving young people the civic competencies they need to fulfill their roles as citizens. The author suggests that by gaining an understanding of how youth perceive their role as citizens and exploring their preferences for civic websites, it may be possible to determine if civic websites are giving young people the skills and encouragement they need to engage in civil society.

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Preface

In March 2006, thousands of high school students across the United States walked out of their classes to protest President George W. Bush's proposed changes to the country's immigration laws. The protests were coordinated through cell phone calls and text message notifications. In June 2008, Michael Geist, a professor at the University of Ottawa created a Facebook group to protest proposed changes to Canada's Copyright Laws.¹ By June 20, over 72,000 people had joined the group and had influenced the withdrawal of the proposed changes by the Canadian government. Facebook was also used in August 2007, when the National Union of Students in the United Kingdom created a group to protest HSBC's plan to charge 9.9% interest on overdrafts of up to £1,500 for recent graduates. The bank eventually shelved plans for the interest increase.

In recent years, popular and academic literature has reported a crisis of civic and political engagement. Studies state that youth in western countries are apathetic and disengaged (see Putnam, 2000 and Blais et al., 2005). Studies suggest that voter turnout is declining in western nations and that youth are driving this trend (Pinto and Gratschew, 2002). However, lower voting rates may not indicate a disinterest among youth in civil society more generally. An alternative body of literature suggests that young people are engaged in civic issues and that new communications technologies have an important role to play in helping youth reconnect with civil society. As the events outlined above suggest, youth are engaged. Moreover, they appear to be using new technologies to gather information and organize around issues that are important to them.

¹ Facebook is a social networking website that is particularly popular among youth. By the middle of 2006, Facebook claimed about 7 millions users, most of them college and university students (Vogelstein, 2007, 191).

A number of online initiatives have been developed to encourage youth to engage with political and social issues. These initiatives have different origins, ranging from national governments, to non-governmental organizations and charities, to commercial companies. The structure, design and features of these websites also differ. Some websites provide opportunities to interact with others who have similar interests, while others simply act as an information source or cyber-bulletin board.

There has been a good deal of research regarding the *features* of civic websites; however, there has been limited research into youth *preferences* and *uses* of civic websites. Without understanding which website elements young people prefer and how these features are used, it is not possible to determine if youth are realizing the potential of new technologies to enhance civic engagement. How do youth view their role as citizens? What features attract youth to websites and encourage participation? By answering these questions, we can exploit the Internet as a powerful civic tool.

In the first chapter, I outline the debate surrounding the perceived crisis of civic engagement by reviewing how citizenship and civic competencies have been conceptualized in academic literature. I then outline the literature that discusses the potential for new media technologies to encourage civic engagement among young people. This is complemented by a discussion of the features of websites that attract youth followed by a summary of the major themes in the literature. In the methodology chapter, I outline the research questions that frame this study, explain how I recruited participants to this study and outline the quantitative and qualitative tools used. Following this, I present the findings of my analysis, discuss the participants' reactions to three civic websites and consider the results in light of major theoretical themes. In

conclusion, I hope to present a clear picture of the preferences youth have for various civic website features and the ability of these sites to develop civic competencies.

I. Citizenship and Civic Competencies

A Crisis of Engagement?

Recently, popular and academic literature has posited a crisis in civic and political engagement.² Relying on measures of electoral participation, party membership, religious adherence, media consumption and volunteering, among others, many authors have made the case that people in western countries are less engaged than ever. In his best-selling book, *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam argues that young people are increasingly disengaged. He cites research indicating that youth are less likely than previous generations to attend church, vote, read and watch the news, show an interest in politics and volunteer (Putnam, 2000, 247-248).

André Blais and his colleagues report similar findings in Canada, suggesting that a lack of political knowledge is the primary reason for this disengagement (2005, 10-11). Blais et al. argue that youth have many of the same priorities and concerns as older Canadians; however, the inability among youth to name a political party that reflects their views demonstrates high levels of disengagement (2005, 10). Like Putnam, Blais and his colleagues place a good deal of importance on traditional indicators of political engagement, including voting and membership in a political party. In fact, Blais states, “to use a religious analogy, not voting can be construed as a venial sin: it is a wrong, one that weak human beings should be urged not to commit but may be forgiven for if they indulge in it” (2000, 92).

² Brenda O’Neill notes that political engagement refers to participation in the formal political arena including: political parties, elections, interest groups, social movements and protest behaviour (2007, 11). Civic engagement can include political participation but “extends to include participation in community activities, normally those designed to bring about some social good (often in the form of a policy change or program implementation), as well as social organizations” (O’Neill, 2007, 11).

Overall trends of decreasing voter turnout are common in western nations, often with young voters the most likely demographic to abstain from casting a ballot. The cross-national voter turnout study conducted by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), demonstrates a worldwide decline in electoral participation since the mid-1980s (Pinto and Gratschew, 2002, 77). Further, the study notes that youth turnout is consistently lower than overall turnout and the gap between the number of young voters and older voters is greater in countries with low voter turnout (Pinto and Gratschew, 2002, 112). In Canada, Jon Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc report clear patterns of decline in electoral turnout among young citizens. In the 2000 federal election, just over one in five newly eligible voters cast a ballot (Pammett and LeDuc, 2003, 4). Pammett and LeDuc further report that, although lower participation has always been common among young citizens, youth are waiting longer to enter the electorate than ever before – a trend that will likely continue to drive turnout down (2003, 4).

However, some scholars argue that limited notions of citizenship have caused many academics to incorrectly identify the problem as one of *declining* levels of engagement, rather than *shifting* forms of engagement. Brian Loader refers to the cultural displacement perspective and argues that youth are not disinterested in politics generally; rather, traditional politics are no longer appropriate to address their concerns (2007, 1-2). As a result, young people have turned elsewhere to find appropriate avenues of civic engagement. Stephen Coleman supports this argument stating, “it is not young people that have disengaged from politics, as critics commonly lament, but contemporary political culture that has become disconnected from the language, values and aspirations of young people” (2007, 166).

Compounding the lack of attention paid by politicians to the issues important to youth, many young people face barriers to participation that prevent them from fully engaging in politics. Some scholars argue that these barriers to meaningful participation have caused youth to become cynical regarding traditional politics. Judith Bessant argues that, when engaging in democratic rhetoric, governments often fail to recognize the obstacles that young people face when they attempt to engage economically, politically or socially (2008, 387). She uses Australia as an example of a democracy constructed in a way that limits opportunities for civic engagement among youth, resulting in active disenfranchisement (Bessant, 2008). Kate Raynes-Goldie and Luke Walker argue that, even when there are no laws or regulations to prevent youth engagement, there are often financial or logistical barriers present that make high levels of participation among youth unlikely (2008, 165). For example, decisions that affect youth are often made through centralized decision-making bodies. Even if youth could gain access to these organizations, there are usually registration fees and travel costs that make it prohibitively expensive for young people to attend en masse. These obstacles to civic engagement may explain why much of the existing political outreach to youth has been unsuccessful. Bessant (2008) argues that political outreach to youth that is not initiated by young people or does not take the voices of youth seriously, is doomed to fail. The Youth Roundtables discussed by Bessant, have been unsuccessful in part because they do not take youth seriously as full citizens. Youth, recognizing this, withdraw from what they see as an ineffective forum for discussion.

David Buckingham (1998) supports this notion that youth are systematically disenfranchised from the political system. He argues that this exclusion leads to an

extreme cynicism among youth about conventional politics. Buckingham suggests that youth have become skeptical as a way of dealing with their perceived exclusion; he borrows the term “cynical chic” from William Gamson (1992) to describe this skepticism:

According to this argument, such expressions of cynicism serve as a valuable - and indeed pleasurable - way of rationalising one's own sense of powerlessness, and even of claiming a degree of superiority and control (Buckingham, 1998, 127).

People who conceive of youth as disenfranchised and cynical often argue that youth, at the same time, are politically aware. Christopher Gifford (2004) supports the idea that youth tend to be cynical of traditional political institutions. He argues that young people are particularly disillusioned when it comes to parliamentary politics and politicians as evidenced by their dissatisfaction with mainstream party politics, low levels of involvement in political parties and decreasing levels of voter turnout. However, Gifford also suggests that youth find alternative methods of engagement by joining community groups and civic organizations.

Despite the popularity of the notion that youth are cynical about traditional politics, two scholars have found that Canadian youth are no more skeptical than older cohorts. Brenda O'Neill found that younger Canadians are more likely to feel satisfied with democracy, federal elections, fairness and effectiveness of the federal government than older Canadians (2001, 15-16). Additionally, Blais et al. (2005) determined that, although youth are more likely than older Canadians to be critical of big business, they are not more frustrated with the fairness of government when compared to other Canadians. These findings suggest that the widespread belief that youth are cynical about

traditional politics may not reflect the Canadian reality. Despite these conclusions, voter turnout rates suggest that there is a disconnect between youth and political participation.

It is important to understand if these reported trends reflect differences in the political attitudes and behaviours of the current generation of youth, or if a limited interest in politics is just a characteristic of young people generally. O'Neill discusses this as the difference between generational and life cycle effects. Generational effects are differences that reflect shared, formative experiences among a cohort often resulting from a shared experience (2001). Proponents of this theory would argue that the generation of youth that grew up during the late 1960s, would be more likely than other citizens to take part in demonstrations due to the international revolutions, often led by students, that culminated in mass protest and riots across the western world in 1968. Conversely, life cycle effects suggests that changes occur in all generations as they move through various stages of their lives (O'Neill, 2001, 10). Advocates for the life cycle theory might argue that young people, regardless of their previous experience, are more likely to participate in political demonstrations as a component of youth culture. O'Neill suggests that an interest in politics reflects a life cycle effect; generally, as Canadians age they tend to become more interested in politics. However, even as interest increases among the current generation of youth, O'Neill suggests that actual participation is likely to remain low. She argues that, among the current generation of youth, political disengagement is a generational effect and, therefore, is unlikely to change over time (2001, 34).

Citizenship Norms

It is clear that there has been an international decline in voter turnout, particularly among young people. However, whether this trend demonstrates a crisis in civic engagement depends on one's understanding of the roles and responsibilities of citizens. The following section will outline four normative assumptions of citizenship followed by a discussion of three emerging models that challenge understandings of what it means to be a citizen.

In *Politics*, Aristotle stated, "there is no general agreement on who is a citizen" (1995, 85). This assertion, made in the fourth century BC, is as applicable today as it was for Aristotle and his contemporaries. Questions about the rights and responsibilities of citizens continue to be debated in legal, political and academic arenas. However, there are four normative assumptions that shape most definitions of citizenship. Russell Dalton (2008) refers to these as the "four broad principles" of citizenship. The first normative assumption is public participation. In the ancient Greek model of citizenship, based on a self-governing state, dutiful citizens expressed their loyalty to the *polis* through political and judicial participation. The expectation of participation emphasized the importance of active political participation for identification as a "good citizen."

The second normative assumption is autonomy, which suggests, "good citizens should be sufficiently informed about government to exercise a participatory role" (Dalton, 2008, 78-79). In ancient Greek society, to be considered a good citizen, one had to have the ability and knowledge to rule and to be ruled (Aristotle, 1995, 94). This norm suggests that citizens need to be both well informed and able to participate in public debate over issues of importance to civil society.

Dalton describes the third normative assumption as “the commitment to social order and the acceptance of state authority” (2008, 79). Heater states that the “good citizen is a keen upholder of law and order” (2004, 206). Moreover he notes a difference between political protest, which is an essential right of citizenship, and random acts of hooliganism. Unlike lawlessness, political protest is the act of a knowledgeable citizen who is disappointed with the political system (Heater, 2004, 206).

The fourth normative assumption concerns the responsibility that citizens have to other members of their community. T. H. Marshall’s collected lectures, published as *Citizenship and Social Class* in 1950 demonstrated the importance of social citizenship, which he describes as the provision of welfare services to those in need. Unless people’s basic needs are met, they are not able to fulfill their roles as citizens, thus making the “democratic principles of political equality and participation lack meaning” (Dalton, 2008, 79). These four tenants reflect the traditional roles and responsibilities of citizenship. Below, I outline three contemporary models of citizenship that assist in an understanding of engagement levels among young people.

Citizenship Continuum

Separately, political scientists Russell Dalton and Lance Bennett have each posited a continuum of citizenship practice. Dalton’s (2008) spectrum places the “dutiful citizen” and the “engaged citizen” at opposing ends. This model is based on Dalton’s factor analysis of people’s answers to the following question: What actions are necessary to be a good citizen? The dutiful citizen adheres to norms of social order and allegiance to the state (Dalton, 2008). This category shows a strong relationship between a

willingness to report a crime, serve on a jury, always obey laws and regulations and report for military service (Dalton, 2008, 80). Dalton also notes that voting correlates strongly with this factor.

The engaged citizenship category is composed of elements related to community and liberalism (Dalton, 2008). Loading heavily on the engaged citizen factor are measures of solidarity, community participation and political autonomy (Dalton, 2008, 81). According to Dalton, autonomy refers to “the citizen’s role in being sufficiently informed about government to exercise a participatory role” (2006, 2). This is reflective of a group of citizens who view collective action, often outside traditional political institutions, as the vehicle for social change. This category notes a decline in respect for authority in favour of increasing self-expression and direct political action (Dalton, 2008). Dalton suggests that the concept of engaged citizenship reflects changing generational experiences and has led to new forms of direct political activity including boycotts, buycotts, demonstrations and Internet activism.

Lance Bennett’s model of “dutiful citizens” versus “actualizing citizens” is similar to, and supports many of, Dalton’s findings. Like Dalton, Bennett (2008) found that dutiful citizens express high levels of obligation to participate in government and civil society and see voting as central to democratic participation. Similar to Dalton’s engaged citizens, Bennett’s actualizing citizens share a diminished sense of social obligation complemented by an increased “sense of individual purpose” (2008, 14). Further, these actualizing citizens are more inclined towards forms of direct political action, including consumer activism and volunteering, and are less interested in voting. Finally, Bennett (2008) notes that they have high levels of mistrust for traditional

institutions such as politics and the media. Bennett argues that there is a “broad, cross-national generational shift in the postindustrial democracies from a *dutiful citizen* model...to an *actualizing citizen* model favoring loosely networked activism to address issues that reflect personal values” (2008, 14, italics in original).

Cosmopolitan Citizenship

Traditionally, citizenship has been viewed as a geographically-rooted concept. In ancient Greece, citizenship defined the relationship that an individual had with the *polis* or city. In the seventeenth century, the Treaty of Westphalia ended both the Thirty Years’ War and the Eighty Years’ War and created the doctrine of state sovereignty – a legal concept of the state that further tied citizenship to geographic location (Heater, 2004, 29). The revolutions of the 18th century had a lasting impact on notions of citizenship by emphasizing this connection between the individual and the nation state and privileging the concept of nationalized citizens. At this time, it became increasingly evident that “an individual could not comfortably enjoy the status of citizens in a nation-state without being and feeling part of that nation, whether that be defined linguistically, racially or by any other test” (Heater, 2004, 59).

However, the geographic boundaries that once limited citizenship are starting to wear. Many scholars have suggested that changes in systems of governance and the increasing effects of globalization mean that citizenship can no longer be limited to actions and allegiances within a single nation. Pippa Norris describes globalization as “a process that erodes national boundaries, integrating national economies, cultures, technologies, and governance, producing complex relations of mutual interdependence”

(2000, 155). Issues that were once viewed as national in scale – including the environment, security and communication policy – are now viewed as intersecting with the international community. William C. Clark notes that, in the area of environmental policy, our interconnectedness is notable whether measured by

the richness of our knowledge about the global environment, the number of environmental treaties, the amount of environmentally conditioned aid or investment, the reach of environmental ‘news,’ or the ‘clout’ carried by environmental arguments in world affairs (2000, 102).

Just as governments are becoming increasingly interested in the actions of their international neighbours, many citizens are becoming more concerned with issues taking place beyond their national borders.

David Held (1998) warns against exaggerating the extent to which globalization signals “the end of the national-state;” however, he does suggest that this global interdependence necessitates a new political theory he terms “cosmopolitan democracy.” For Held, cosmopolitan democracy necessitates the “creation of new political institutions that would coexist with the systems of states but which would override states in clearly defined spheres of activity where those activities have demonstrable transnational and international consequences” (1998, 21). Held’s theory implies a citizenry engaged with international issues and engaged in a civil society that extends beyond national boundaries. Studies have found that such a citizenry is indeed emerging.

Norris (2000) suggests that the increased effects of globalization will lead to a “*cosmopolitan* orientation” as people become increasingly aware of, and interested in, international events and cultures. In contrast to *Nationalists*, who exhibit strong ties to the nation-state, Norris notes that *Cosmopolitans* identify “more broadly with their continent or with the world as a whole, and have greater faith in the institutions of global

governance” (2000, 159). She argues that, in postindustrial, postcommunist and developing countries alike, younger people are more likely to exhibit cosmopolitan characteristics. Further, she notes that this is likely a generational, rather than life cycle effect, since young people have grown up in a more globalized world than their parents and grandparents (2000, 165).

Audrey Osler and Hugh Starkey (2003) argue that the migratory nature of postmodern society creates problems for the notion of citizenship as uniquely tied to a single nation state. Osler and Starkey use Held’s theory of a cosmopolitan democracy to support their challenge to the nation as the primary site of democratic activity and citizenship. They argue that cosmopolitan citizens are better able to accommodate their national citizenship with past experiences. This is particularly true for a generation of students “who, in a globalised world are likely to have shifting and multiple cultural identities and a sense of belonging that is not expressed first and foremost in terms of the nation” (Osler and Starkey, 2003, 244-245).

Citizen as Consumer

The third citizenship model theorizes the citizen as consumer. Bennett notes that, “for many of today’s global citizens, the very private activities of consumption are regarded as having public and even international consequences for human rights, labor conditions, life in fragile democracies, and environmental quality” (2000, 308).

Consumers in the western world have more power than ever before, and youth, with their disposable income and influence on purchases within the family, make up a significant portion of the consumer market.

For Margaret Scammell, the “art of consumption is becoming increasingly suffused with citizenship characteristics and considerations” (2000, 351). Some companies have noted that consumers are interested in spending their money on products and organizations that reflect their social values. These companies, referred to by Scammell (2003) as “beautiful corporations,” have adapted their practices and promotions to reflect the power of the enlightened consumer. With an increase in available products, consumers now wield power over producers as they compare their options. Companies face greater competition from others making similar products and companies now give consumers the opportunity to customize their purchases. Scammell notes that the “beautiful corporations” model only works if consumers routinely project their roles as citizens into purchase decisions (2003, 119). As companies continue to recognize the desire of citizen-consumers to enact their civic duty through the consumer choices they make, the opportunities for consumer activism have become increasingly available and affordable.

Bennett notes that activists can use popular brands to bring attention to their interests. As an example, he notes that, “attaching the icon of songbirds to the issue of fair trade coffee has brought networks of bird watchers and conservationists to the issue of sustainable local agriculture in ways that more conventional ideological discourse could not” (Bennett, 2003, 147). Many coffee companies, including Starbucks, have introduced fair trade products. Some companies, including Ottawa-based Bridgehead, sell exclusively fair trade coffee. Asim Firat suggests that consumption is often a process of identity formation and performance, often becoming “an experience of finding self-expression, a recognition of purpose and identity” (Firat, 1998, as quoted in Scammell,

2003, 123). Selling fair trade coffee provides a company with a socially responsible image, but it also gives consumers the opportunity to feel positive about their purchases and construct an identity that reflects concern over the effects of free trade on small coffee producers.

Democracy scholar, Benjamin Barber, states that the notion of a consumers' republic is an oxymoron (2007, 126). He argues that the basis for a republic is its relationship to the public; a public that is not a summation of "private desires" (Barber, 2007, 126). Despite his skepticism over the notion of a consumer republic, Barber does not reject the argument that consumers have an important role to play in developing civic society by gaining dominance over the marketplace. Like Scammell, Barber states that there are some trends that suggest that such a transition is occurring.

Cultural critics often argue that consumers are bereft of real needs and wants; rather they turn to producers and advertisers to tell them what to purchase (Barber, 2007). Civic consumerism is a revolt against the seeming powerlessness of consumers in the face of large corporations. Civic consumerism "hopes to 'empower' consumers for real by making them thoughtful and responsible shoppers using collective consumer clout to shape what is sold and how it is sold" (Barber, 2007, 293). Barber notes that the traditional tool of the consumer citizen has been the boycott – a tool that is particularly powerful when supported by government action.³ Boycotts allow consumers to speak to producers through the products they choose to buy (Barber, 2007, 299).

³ Barber provides two examples of effective, government supported, boycotts: Dolphin-safe Tuna and Rugmark. Dolphin-safe Tuna encouraged fishermen to avoid capturing dolphins through the use of specially designed nets. It was supported by government accords in the United States, Mexico and Panama. Rugmark, a nonprofit organization

However, Barber notes limits to boycotts as a tool to empower citizens. He argues that markets are a “device of private goods” (Barber, 2007, 300). When the demands of public and private goods can be reconciled, they can coexist; however, when a compromise cannot be reached, private goods triumph (Barber, 2007). For example, there has been an increase in initiatives that encourage people to buy locally. Whether it is food products or consumer goods, buying locally helps support the local economy and reduces the strain on the environment caused by the unnecessary transportation of goods. However, one of the fastest growing businesses in the world is the big-box retailer, Wal-Mart.⁴ By selling low-priced goods – from food to clothing to home decor – all in one location, Barber argues that Wal-Mart “sets the consumer against the citizen in us” (2007, 133). The citizen would like to buy local goods to support their community; however, the consumer wants the best deal available. Wal-Mart acts as the antithesis of buying local, purchasing a large portion of its goods from foreign markets.⁵ Despite the citizen’s desire to support local communities, the consumer is attracted to the low prices offered by Wal-Mart. Barber suggests that, in this situation, the consumer always wins.

In view of this dilemma, civic consumerism has developed strategies to “affirm rather than penalize companies whose practices they inspire to influence” (Barber, 2007, 300). Such policies, often referred to as buycotts, allow citizen consumers to support corporations that engage in socially responsible behaviour. By using consumer dollars to

that works to end child labour in rug manufacturing, has influenced workplace policies internationally (Barber, 2007, 298-299).

⁴ Fortune Global 500 listed Wal-Mart as the world's largest public corporation by revenue in 2008.

⁵ In 2003, Forbes Magazine reports that “Wal-Mart now consumes 10% of China's exports to the U.S. and 1% of China's GDP.”

support socially responsible companies, civic consumerism has begun to transfer power away from advertisers and corporations, into the hands of the consumer.

Civil Society and Civic Competencies

Civil society is traditionally seen as the sphere in which citizens can be active members of society. The term itself has been defined multiple ways by many different scholars. Michael Edwards (2004) identifies three different classifications of civil society definitions. Associational life models view civil society as “a *part* of society distinct from states and markets, formed for the purposes of advancing common interests and facilitating collective action” (Edwards, 2004, vii, italics in original). In this model, civil society consists of the institutions and associations, such as non-governmental organizations, that connect the family to the state (Edwards, 2004). Scholars in this camp disagree on whether “political society” – including political parties, political organizations and parliament – should be included as a component of civil society or seen as distinct (Edwards, 2004, 25). The second model of civil society is a normative presentation of a “good society” where citizens are dedicated to the service of their peers rather than to their own self-interest (Edwards, 2004). The third model is civil society as the public sphere – essentially a location for “public deliberation, rational dialogue and the exercise of ‘active citizenship’ in pursuit of the common interest” (Edwards, 2004, viii).

For the purposes of this study, I will use Barber’s definition of civil society. Barber’s model fits in Edwards’ associational life category, as it is not connected to the market or the state. For Barber, civil society suggests the

independent domain of free social life where neither governments nor private markets are sovereign; a realm we create for ourselves through associated common action in families, clans, churches, and communities; a 'third sector' (the other two are the state and the market) that mediates between our specific individuality as economic producers and consumers and our abstract collectivity as members of a sovereign people (1998, 4).

For Barber, then, civil society is a mediating ground that lies between the state and the market and allows for citizens to engage in "civic activity" (1998, 34). Barber promotes the civically engaged citizen as a necessary component for strong democracy.

In order to be civically engaged, however, people need the tools and skills of citizenship – often referred to as civic competencies. Dahlgren notes that, "civil society can serve as a training ground that 'grooms' citizens, preparing them for civic participation and political engagement" (2006, 272). Dahlgren includes among these skills the ability to recognize and respond to political situations, interact in social situations and define a variety of issues. However, for Dahlgren, the civic agency that accompanies these skills and empowers citizens is of paramount importance. Civic competencies can emerge from the public or private spheres, as demonstrated by the blurring lines between politics and popular culture (Dahlgren, 2006).

As a component of its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) constructed a framework for analyzing key civic competencies among students who had completed compulsory schooling. They developed three categories of competencies that they deemed necessary for full societal participation. These three categories are: using tools interactively, functioning in a heterogeneous group and acting autonomously (OECD, 2005).

The first competency is using tools interactively. This involves the ability to apply language, symbols and text interactively, particularly in conversation with others. It further includes the ability to use knowledge and information interactively. This involves the ability to assess the source of information, determine its legitimacy, organize it as fact or opinion and respond with appropriate activity. Finally, this category notes the importance of using technology interactively. The OECD study reflects on how technological literacy is essential to harness the potential of new technologies to change the way people interact, by reducing the importance of geographic location and by making vast amounts of information immediately accessible (OECD, 2005, 11).

The second competency is interacting in a heterogeneous group. This category reflects the importance of empathy and social capital, as well as the need to operate in diverse social groups. This competency category includes skills relating to social interaction, co-operation and conflict resolution (OECD, 2005, 12). The skills in this competency category give people the tools to network effectively, work in teams and manage conflict. These skills are necessary to build functioning communities.

The final competency is acting autonomously. This category necessitates an understanding of the rights and responsibilities that individuals have as citizens. From this, individuals need to be able to realize their identity, set goals and assert their rights as individual citizens (OECD, 2005, 14). The OECD tracks these competencies among individuals in member countries that have finished mandatory schooling (2005, 3). The selection of students as their focus reflects the suggestion that schools are viewed as a primary site of civic education.

In recent years, there has been wide discussion around the importance and effectiveness of citizenship education as a means to develop civic competencies. Education, particularly civics classes, has traditionally been viewed as the most effective vehicle for citizenship education. However, scholars have noted recently that traditional civics education programs are not effective in exciting young people about their roles as citizens. In one example, Osler and Starkey argue that the emphasis on national citizenship does not reflect the civic understandings of many young people and might even alienate them by ignoring their experiences (2003, 244-245). They argue that citizenship education must address

peace, human rights, democracy and development. It is about equipping young people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to make a difference. It is oriented towards the future, preparing young citizens to play an active role in shaping the world at all levels, from the local to the global (Osler and Starky, 2003, 252).

Many scholars have suggested that new technologies, particularly the Internet, have an important role to play in developing civic competencies. Howard Rheingold suggests that teachers might be able to help students develop their civic competencies by using new media to communicate issues they care about. Rheingold states:

My fundamental assumption for beginning to teach participatory media skills myself...is that 'voice,' the unique style of personal expression that distinguishes one's communications from those of others, can be called upon to help connect young people's energetic involvement in identity-formation with their potential engagement as with society as citizens. Moving from a private to a public voice can help students turn their self-expression into a form of participation (2008, 101)

Marina Umaschi Bers (2008) notes the use of virtual worlds as an avenue to civic engagement by allowing young people to address issues of democratic participation online and by helping them improve their interpersonal communication skills.

This chapter has outlined a number of citizenship norms. It has also addressed the changes that scholars are noting in the ways youth enact their citizenship. The following chapter will develop the ideas introduced in this chapter surrounding the role that new media can play in developing civic competencies. Further, I will address the democratic potentials of new media and outline the features that make them attractive to young people.

II. New Media and Civic Engagement

The perceived crisis in civic engagement, combined with the increasing popularity and accessibility of the Internet, has created speculation about the democratic potential of new media and the opportunity it presents to reconnect youth to civil society. For the purposes of this study, youth will be considered those ages 18 to 24. This age range is often used in studies regarding youth, particularly those concerned with first time voters (Gerodimos, 2008). The current generation of young people has been labeled alternatively the dotcom generation, the digital generation and the Net generation. Many of these youth have never known a world without the Internet and have benefited from the accelerated access to information and communication opportunities new media technologies afford. Moreover, a number of characteristics of new media, and Web 2.0 specifically, have shaped how these young people express their identities and how they communicate with their peers. Web 2.0 refers to Internet technology and software applications that allow for increased creativity and interaction among users, including wikis, social networking sites, and blogs. Web 2.0 builds on the features of Web 1.0 by allowing users to exercise control over the data on a web page by uploading, changing or engaging with the site's information.

Academics hold a variety of positions on the inherent attributes of the Internet as a democratic medium. Barrie Axford (2001) describes three broad positions regarding the democratic nature of the Internet: the retro-nostalgic; the skeptic; and the techno-progressive. Retro-nostalgics are generally negative about forms of new media that they view as serving corporations' bottom line rather than contributing information to the public good (Axford, 2001, 5). Moreover, they long for the days of pure media,

unencumbered by profit margins – a time that many scholars insist never existed. Barber would be considered an example of the retro-nostalgic view. He argues that new media are detrimental to strong versions of participatory democracy. Barber states that cyberpolitics, or political activity undertaken online, will lead to increased isolation and alienation and that “new media are likely to acquire all of the political defects of a pictorially based, image-mongering, feeling-engendering, sentiment-arousing, one-on-one (one-screen-per-person) civic culture” (2003, 40). Finally, he argues that the market will control new technologies, which will lead to their privatization and prevent the conditions necessary for strong democracy. Moreover, retro-nostalgics tend to view the citizen as an avid consumer who is vulnerable to manipulation by corporate culture.

Michael Schudson and Douglas Schuler both reflect the skeptical viewpoint described by Axford. This position does not find any new characteristics or logics inherent to new media that might displace established practices (Axford, 2001). Schudson (1998) questions the belief that new media can revitalize democracy by reviving the ideal of the active citizen through the logics of new media. He argues that digital media may make democracy more accessible, and therefore, easier to practice. However, assumptions about the inherent democratic potential of new media mistakenly assume that they will produce the democratic ideal of the informed citizen (Schudson, 1998). Schuler (2003) refers to the Internet as a “democratic communication infrastructure” that can provide a forum for increased engagement by citizens. However, he believes that new media will reflect the ownership trends of earlier media thus making any real change in the distribution of information difficult.

In their study of Internet use by Italian students, David Calenda and Lorenzo Mosca (2007^a) focus on whether or not political use of the Internet is shaped by the characteristics of its users. Their results indicate that the more students engage in different offline social and political organizations the more likely they are to use the Internet to achieve political ends. However, based on their results, Calenda and Mosca (2007^a) argue that the characteristics of offline engagement – including inaction – are reproduced online. These findings reflect the skeptical viewpoint presented by Axford: the Internet is appropriated and shaped by the pre-existing offline practices of users. New media are not inherently democratic – their interactive and participatory characteristics increase the potential for civic engagement. This cautious view of the civic potential of new media is emerging as the dominant view among contemporary scholars (see also Livingstone, Couldry and Markham, 2007; Xenos and Bennett, 2007; Vromen, 2007). Stephen Coleman and Gustavo Mesch refer to this view as the “reinforcement thesis,” which suggests that the Internet is “strengthening rather than radically transforming existing patterns of political participation” (2007, 38).

In his third classification, Axford (2001) describes the “techno-progressives” as those who credit new media with the reformation of public space and citizenship identities. Kate Raynes-Goldie and Luke Walker, who demonstrate the techno-progressive position, address the argument of skeptics that the Internet extends rather than transforms engagement. In their study of TakingITGlobal.org, one of the world’s largest websites dedicated to citizen engagement, they find that online civic engagement is a precursor to offline engagement (Raynes-Goldie and Walker, 2008). They argue that the Internet facilitates action elsewhere rather than being a site of action itself. This

suggests that some characteristics of new media have the potential to make engagement more accessible and enjoyable for youth. Raynes-Goldie and Walker also argue that a “shift in perspective of what civic engagement is and how it could occur online is necessary to evaluate [web]sites, methodologies, and tools that promote civic engagement among youth” (2008, 161). Mesch and Coleman (2007) outline the position of the mobilisation theorists who argue that the interactive features of the Internet encourage new political activities by reducing barriers to information access and creating opportunities for political debate. The mobilisation theorists claim that “net activism represents a distinctive type of political participation, which differs in many ways from conventional activities, like working for political parties, organising grass-roots social movements or lobbying elected officials” (Mesch and Coleman, 2007, 38). Critics of the techno-progressive position argue that its adherents are neophiles – reflecting an excessive zeal for new technologies and an unwillingness to see them simply as variations on previously existing technologies (Axford, 2001).

Website Features

Access to new information technology resources is not uniform among western youth. This disparity is often referred to as the “digital divide” and has been the subject of academic research. Pippa Norris notes that access to digital media creates inequalities between those who have access to information and opportunities to engage in political

life and those who do not.⁶ For those who have access to the Internet, there are few areas of life that have not been affected by the speed, immediacy and interactive nature of new media. Politicians, charities and grassroots movements have begun to use digital media in an attempt to engage youth. There are those who argue, however, that organizations are not using the Internet to its full potential (Gerodimos, 2008). The following section examines the features that scholars have suggested are vital to the success of websites designed to encourage civic and political participation. The research suggests six features of websites that are important when organizations seek to engage young people online: interactivity; information; organization and networking; aesthetics and functionality; popular culture and consumer activism; and, authenticity.

Interactivity

One of the features of Web 2.0 that differentiates it from earlier web-based applications is its interactivity. Many websites allow users to engage with online content. Through wiki-software, for example, users can become both producers and consumers of information. Michael Xenos and Kirsten Foot argue that interactivity is one of the most important features of political websites that cater to youth because it allows for shared control between the site producer and the collectivity of site users (Xenos and Foot, 2008, 62-63). This includes instances where information on the site is co-produced by the users

⁶ Norris' definition of the digital divide includes three components. The global divide reflects differences in access to digital media between industrialized and developing societies. The social divide reflects the unequal access to information within individual nations. The democratic divide reflects the difference between those who use new technologies to participate in political life, and those who do not (Norris, 2001, 4).

and creators of the site. Kathryn Montgomery and Barbara Gottlieb-Robles argue that interactivity, particularly the ability to create site content, is vital for the creation of a youth voice (2006, 140).

Xenos and Foot describe two types of interactivity. The first type is characterized by an information transaction between the site producer and the site user. An example of this type of interactivity is customization. Users provide information about their interests and preferences, and the site producer creates a customized communications experience based on this information (Xenos and Foot, 2008, 62). Mesch and Coleman argue that the information age has led to a shift toward personalized political information used to reinforce personal political opinions (2007, 37). Transactional interactivity supports this trend towards personalization by allowing users to select the information they wish to receive based on their political preferences. Google News is an example of a website that allows for such customization opportunities. By allowing users to select the topics and news sources that they are interested in, Google News creates a personalized news experience for each individual user.

The second type of interactivity is characterized by the co-production of website content by the site producer and the collective site users. An example of this type of interactivity is the collaboration between producers and users to create website content on the virtual encyclopedia *Wikipedia* – an encyclopedia owned by no one, with tens of thousands of authors (Tapscott and Williams, 2006). As with other sites that use wiki software, *Wikipedia* allows any registered site user to add, edit or delete data appearing on the webpage. In the case of *Wikipedia*, the result of collaboration is the world's largest

online encyclopedia, bigger than the paper-based *Encyclopedia Britannica* and with a similar record of accuracy (Tapscott and Williams, 2006).

Axford notes two additional features of the Internet, related to interactivity, that promote civic engagement. Reflexivity refers to the ability to adapt to the needs and wants of the users. Xenos and Foot refer to interaction between the site producer and the site visitor (Xenos and Foot, 2008, 62). This includes transactions where the user provides information about herself and the information on the site is automatically tailored to her specific interests. However, some scholars have argued that the “hyper-reflexive” nature of the Internet has threatened democracy by turning politics into a public relations battle rather than a competition of ideas (Moog and Sluyter-Beltrao, 2001, 37-38).

Axford also suggests that immediacy is an important characteristic of new media. The current generation of youth has often been identified as having short attention spans. Television producers try to find ways to connect with a generation of young people who always have their finger on the remote (or on their TiVo) ready to flip to a different channel (Jenkins, 2006). The immediacy of Web 2.0 software and the ability to toggle between multiple sites at a time is attractive for youth who prefer to engage with a variety of media. The interactive properties of the Internet also mean that sites can adapt to the interests of users so that they do not become bored with the site.

Scholars have different perspectives on the implications of the desire for immediacy among youth. O’Neill (2007) suggests that this desire for immediate results is actually responsible for the increasing levels of volunteerism among youth. In her

research, O'Neill (2007) found that young Canadians report higher levels of volunteerism than all other age groups.⁷ She suggests that volunteering provides an immediate sense of fulfillment that appeals to young people. Through features that allow people to network based on shared interests, the Internet creates avenues for discussion, organization and action, thereby expanding opportunities for volunteering. It is also necessary to note, however, that the desire for immediacy may serve to enhance or hinder democratic participation:

[Although] the capacity for collective action, community building, and mobilization are unprecedented...the move toward increasingly personalized media and one-to-one marketing may encourage self-obsession, instant gratification, and impulsive behaviors (Montgomery, 2008, 42).

Despite these potential drawbacks, interactivity allows youth an enhanced degree of creativity. In their focus groups with politically active youth, Xenos and Foot found that the informal nature of the Internet leads young people to funny and offbeat content that they would not find offline (2008, 56). Photo galleries offer one forum for creativity. Xenos and Foot's focus group participants included the use of cartoons, animations and parody in addition to photos (2008, 56). Some websites allow opportunities for users to upload their own photos and videos, thus combining the Internet's potential for interactivity and creative expression.

⁷ It is important to note that mandatory volunteer hours for high school students implemented by some provinces may also be driving these numbers.

Information

While traditional media are still the dominant sources of news, the Internet is quickly becoming an important site of information collection for many people.⁸

Researchers have found that youth, in particular, are more likely to get news online than adults (Livingstone, et al., 2007). This is particularly true when it comes to political news. In their study of media use during the 2005 elections in the United Kingdom, Mesch and Coleman (2007) found that youth cited the Internet as a particularly important media channel for accessing election information. This preference for information found on the Internet is based on young people's profound distrust of mainstream media (Mesch and Coleman, 2007). Calenda and Mosca note that the Internet can be used as an alternative media source to protest when issues are not adequately covered in the mainstream media (2007^b, 90). Furthermore, youth prefer the flexibility and variety offered by Internet-based news media (Mesch and Coleman, 2007). By allowing users to select only those categories of news that they are interested in, many homepages create a different "front page" for each user.

In their study of civically engaged youth, Dahlgren and Olsson examine information consumption by youth belonging to established political parties compared to those involved in alternative political movements. They suggest that youth in established political parties use the Internet as an extension of traditional mass media, allowing for

⁸ The Pew Research Centre for People and the Press reported at the end of 2008 that the Internet has surpassed newspapers as the leading source of national and international news. 40% of people report receiving national and international news from the Internet as opposed to 35% of people who report reading a newspaper for the same type of news (Pew, 2008, 1).

the solidification of their mainstream political identities (Dahlgren and Olsson, 2007, 71). Youth involved in alternative political movements, however, reject mainstream media and use the Internet to search for alternative media sources that reflect their interests (Dahlgren and Olsson, 2007). Further, Dahlgren and Olsson note that youth involved in traditional and alternative politics both use the Internet to promote debate and discussion regarding issues of importance to their organizations. Regardless of their different political philosophies, Dahlgren and Olsson argue that the Internet has emerged as an important tool in information collection for youth engaged in both traditional and alternative politics.

The Internet not only serves as a tool for information collection, it also allows users to disseminate information on topics of interest to them. Weblogs, or blogs, allow one or more users to post information on topics of their choosing. Although the credibility of blogs varies, many bloggers feel an obligation to their audience and are well respected for providing accurate information. For example, Xeni Jardin, a regular contributor to the popular weblog Boing Boing, was so well received and trusted that she was given a spot on National Public Radio (Shirky, 2009, 72). Listservs are another important tool for information dissemination. An electronic mailing software application, listservs allow for the management of email addresses. Members of listservs can send messages to fellow members alerting them to news stories, events or information of interest to the group. Blogs and listservs are both vital tools for information dissemination that are available to any Internet user interested in sharing ideas and news stories.

Organization and Networking

Dahlgren and Olsson state that youth engaged in both traditional and alternative politics use the Internet for organizational purposes. Often used as a tool for internal organization, the Internet is vital for managing mailing lists, information and recruitment initiatives (Dahlgren and Olsson, 2007). These authors found that, for youth involved in alternative politics, new media is a particularly important tool for the organization of protests. For example, alternative movements often engage in practices referred to as “culture jamming,” to deride commercialism and corporate dominance. Culture jamming is a term used to describe a wide range of public activity that opposes mass commercialization. Mark Dery, who claims the first use of the term in an *Adbusters* magazine article, argues culture jamming:

might best be defined as media hacking, information warfare, terror-art, and guerrilla semiotics, all in one. Billboard bandits, pirate TV and radio broadcasters, media hoaxers, and other vernacular media wrenchers who intrude on the intruders, investing ads, newscasts, and other media artifacts with subversive meanings are all culture jammers (Dery, 1993).

One notable example of culture jamming was the 2004 release of *The Grey Album* by Danger Mouse. The album was a mash-up, or a remix, of songs from the Beatles’ *White Album* and rapper Jay-Z’s *Black Album*. EMI, the copyright holder of the Beatles, tried to prevent distribution of the album. The popularity of Danger Mouse’s album led to a dramatic increase in the popularity of mash-ups and culminated in “Grey Tuesday,” a day of electronic civil disobedience to protest the profit-driven structure of the music industry. On “Grey Tuesday,” February 24, 2004, *The Grey Album* was available for free downloading on Danger Mouse’s website. The organization involved in planning a culture jamming event includes research, information dissemination, organization and

mobilization, all of which can be expedited using the Internet (Dahlgren and Olsson, 2007).

Youth also use civic websites for social networking. In many ways, networking is similar to organization. However, organizational tools allow users with similar interests to connect with the goal of action. Networking software, on the other hand, allows users to create a profile that identifies personal details about their location, interests and activities. Users can connect with others through their own profile to discuss issues or interests without the assumption that the partnership will lead to civic action. Networking tools are an important component of civic engagement websites because they also allow users to experiment with identity formation. Gitte Stald (2008) suggests that people, particularly youth, adopt a variety of identities depending on the peer group present. Youth may audition new identities online to gauge a peer groups' response before adopting that identity offline. danah boyd refers to social networks sites as "digital bod[ies] where individuals must write themselves into being" (2008, 129). The act of forming and presenting an online identity gives people the opportunity to create a profile that can highlight and display certain aspects of their personality. Through these profiles, users can join groups or projects that help link them to communities of interest. These communities, in turn, help to create a sense of agency that demonstrates the potential for political influence.

A further benefit of the organization and networking tools on civic engagement websites is the motivation they provide to take the step from information collection to action. Many authors argue that, although young people show a general interest in civic issues, this interest has only moderate translation into action (Montgomery, 2008). The

possibility of connecting youth who are interested in similar issues might help eliminate the disconnect between interest and opportunities for civic engagement. In their survey of young users of TakingITGlobal.org, Raynes-Goldie and Walker found that 73.9 percent of users agreed that, “through my experience with TakingITGlobal, my perception of the ability of youth to affect change in the world has improved” (2008, 171). The benefit of organization and networking opportunities is the motivation that comes when youth understand that they are not alone in their interest in a certain topic.

Aesthetics and Functionality

Although it is rarely discussed in relation to civic websites, aesthetics play an important role in both the attractiveness and usability of websites. While the majority of the research into website design preference focuses on e-commerce, it is valuable to assess the findings as they relate to civic websites. Initially, web designers were concerned solely with the functionality of websites. Functionality refers to the creation of websites where users can efficiently obtain the information they require (Thorlacius, 2007). Functional websites should be easy to navigate, free of errors and easily searchable, and provide the quickest route to necessary information. Some web designers advocate websites that adhere to a limited concept of functionality, that wholly ignores the role of visual communication in supporting functionality (Thorlacius, 2007). Lisbeth Thorlacius (2007) argues that visual communication is an integral component of daily life and, to ignore the potential of graphics in supporting website functionality, is limiting.

Striking a balance between aesthetics and functionality is essential to the design of attractive websites. Alistair Sutcliffe (2002) suggests that initial interest in a website, is necessary to motivate the user to continue to navigate the website. However, the aesthetics must also support the content and function of the website (Thorlacius, 2007, 68). Visual images send important semiotic cues and can be used to anchor the text and draw users' attention to important areas of the website (Thorlacius, 2007, 66). Further, the aesthetics and graphics that appear on the website project visual cues about the sender; therefore, the visual images should reflect the organization that has created the site (Thorlacius, 2007). For example, the website for a national art gallery would likely promote visual graphics over function. Alternatively, a government website for the department of finance would likely sacrifice flashy aesthetics in favour of functionality and ease of navigation.

Research into youth website preferences has clearly revealed differences in preferences between demographics. In his study of youth preferences for political websites, Coleman (2008) finds that youth are critical of flashy website designs on political sites. Livingstone (2008) reports that, when creating personal profiles on social networking sites, young teens like to redesign their sites regularly using highly-stylized graphics. Conversely, older teens prefer clean profiles with limited aesthetic enhancements. In her doctoral research at the University of California, boyd further emphasizes these aesthetic preferences in a blog entry titled "Viewing American class divisions through Facebook and MySpace," where she argues that lifestyle aesthetics are being reproduced on social networking sites. She argues that lower class youth and racial minorities are more likely to be attracted to the flashy aesthetics of MySpace reminiscent

of hip hop culture. On the other hand, upper class, white teens are attracted to the “clean or modern look of Facebook [that] is akin to West Elm or Pottery Barn or any poshy Scandinavian design house” (boyd, 2007).

Popular Culture and Consumer Activism

As discussed in the first chapter, youth are increasingly becoming avid consumers of popular culture. Not only are young people focused on celebrity culture, but they increasingly have disposable income that allows them to build an identity through the purchase of specific consumer goods. This type of consumer activism is increasingly viewed as a legitimate way for individuals to express their citizenship. As organizations and corporations are becoming aware of this trend toward consumer activism, they are increasing their focus on cause marketing. Cause marketing refers to the broad movement of companies towards socially responsible activities. It can include cooperative efforts between for-profit companies and charitable organizations. Cause marketing also refers to the attachment of organizations to specific social issues – including the greening of products or the promotions of fair trade goods.

Montgomery uses the Rock the Vote campaign as an example of a movement that has been particularly successful at combining activism and advertising (2008, 31). Partnered with sponsors including Dr. Pepper, Ben and Jerry’s Homemade, Motorola and Cingular Wireless, Rock the Vote has launched a concert series, voter registration bus and “branded” instant messaging, all to promote electoral participation among young voters (Montgomery, 2008, 31). According to its estimates, Rock the Vote’s online

campaign brought 45 percent of American 18 to 24 year olds in the United States to the website in the weeks before the 2004 presidential election and helped online voter registrations reach 1.2 million (Montgomery, 2008, 31). The goal of Rock the Vote is to package “appeals for political participation into user-friendly pop culture products designed for integration into the busy lives of young people” (Montgomery, 2008, 31). These campaigns capitalize on the interest young people have in popular culture. Montgomery argues that the intertwining of politics and branding and the idea of cause marketing have been an important part of what has made Rock the Vote successful as an advocate for youth engagement in elections.

Although cause marketing and celebrity endorsements can help interest young people in political and social issues and encourage engagement, Montgomery warns that there is a danger that “intertwining politics with brand marketing could ultimately undermine the potential of these campaigns” (Montgomery, 2008, 32). Peter Levine goes further stating that the proliferation of celebrity culture has the potential to reduce individual creativity and follows a trend towards homogeneous culture (2008, 123). Levine’s concern is that this similarity may prevent communities and nations from forming and promoting their own cultures.

In his exploration of the relationship between politics and popular culture, Coleman notes that an interest in popular culture does not necessarily equate with political apathy. Coleman (2007) finds that viewers of the British reality entertainment program, *Big Brother*, showed no less interest in the UK election than the general population. Jennifer Earl and Alan Schussman (2008) reviewed the use of *PetitionOnline*, a website that allows users to create and circulate petitions via the Internet. Although

many of the petitions are entertainment-themed, Earl and Schussman argue that the popularity of this form of traditional political protest should be viewed as an alternative method of civic engagement. They argue that, in a society dominated by large corporations, protest against such bodies should be viewed as a form of civic activity. There is only a thin line distinguishing civic engagement from commercial activity and “what may seem like clearly nonpolitical acts...are clearly indicator[s] of deeper transformations surrounding cultural consumption and civic engagement” (Earl and Schussman, 2008, 73). Furthermore, youth can acquaint themselves with the mechanisms of traditional politics through popular culture, including voting for favourite personalities on reality television and campaigning for a pet cause using PetitionOnline.

As demonstrated by many of these online petitions and the success of the Rock the Vote campaign, popular culture, particularly celebrity culture, plays an important role in the lives of young people. Studies indicate that youth often demonstrate particularly high levels of interest in celebrity culture. Young people are less interested, for example, in traditional political stories and more likely to follow popular or celebrity issues (Livingstone et al., 2007). Many political and charitable organizations have begun to recruit celebrities to help promote their causes. Motorola, for example, sent thousands of cell phone users an email containing a video of teen actor Rachel Bilson encouraging youth to register to vote in the 2004 US presidential election (Montgomery, 2008, 32). The involvement of Bono and his band U2 in the creation and management of DATA (Debt, AIDS, Trade, Africa), an organization dedicated to eradicating AIDS and extreme poverty in Africa, is likely one of the more well-known examples of celebrity civic engagement.

Political and social movements benefit from celebrity partnerships for a number of reasons. Prior to their affiliation with a cause, celebrities command spectators, giving the movement access to an audience (Street, 2002, 434). Further, movements often need an audience that has a collective identity that matches the goals of the organization. Street notes that celebrities, particularly musicians, play a role in collective identity formation (2002, 437). Celebrities also have access to exclusive networks, unavailable to the average organizer, that allow them to attract fellow stars to the cause (Street, 2002). Street further notes that celebrities can “legitimate political causes and political movements by lending their ‘credibility’ and ‘popularity’ to them” (2002, 437).

This question of legitimacy is an important one. Stars with personae that do not match the goals of the campaign, seem inauthentic or appear to be seeking financial gain, could be ineffectual or even detrimental to a campaign. Street, however, suggests that an appropriate celebrity representative can help add credibility to a campaign. Celebrities are a product of their time. As such, their political and social views are shaped by similar societal influences to others in their generation. This suggests that their views would be similar to other members of their cohort (Street, 2002). Street also notes that celebrities try to cultivate a good relationship with their fans; therefore, they tend to “tailor their politics to their fans” (2002, 435). This suggests that they will take political and social positions that reflect the general consensus of their fans. Despite these advantages, a celebrity’s decision to support a campaign that does not reflect their public personae may make both the celebrity and the cause appear inauthentic.

Authenticity

The manner in which a website incorporates each of the above features – interactivity, information, organization and networking, aesthetics and functionality, popular culture and consumer activism – helps determine its level of authenticity. Scholars have used authenticity to refer to a variety of attributes. For example, Roman Gerodimos (2008) notes that websites are perceived as authentic when users can clearly see connections between the website and results. Gerodimos suggests that understanding the relationship between actions and the resulting beneficial consequences is the key to developing civic efficacy, which in turn, increases engagement. Xenos and Foot (2008) note that young people focus on the legitimacy of the source when assessing authenticity. Moreover, they suggest that young people are sensitive to the way new technology is used. Failure to engage youth through the interactive features afforded by Web 2.0, for example, may lead young people to the conclusion that a cause is inauthentic. Overall, authenticity refers to the sense of trust that young people have in a website. This level of trust may be influenced by the site's transparency or a perception of the legitimacy of the source.

The level and type of interactivity on a website also influences its perceived authenticity among users. Xenos and Foot (2008) argue that young people have high levels of technological sophistication, and are skeptical about providing the information required on political websites that rely on transactional interactivity. Not only are they concerned that the information provided will be used for purposes of solicitation, but youth are also aware that information about personal preferences can be used to tailor a campaign message that may not reflect the true intentions of a candidate or party (Xenos

and Foot, 2008, 64). Conversely, websites that rely on collaboration mean that power over site content is shared between users and producers. The equal distribution of power over the site's information means that sites rely on co-productive interactivity and are often perceived to have higher levels of authenticity.⁹

The aesthetics and tools on a website also contribute to perceived authenticity. Raynes-Goldie and Walker argue that "in providing youth-friendly social tools such as blogs and profiles, youth are engaged...with the same types of tools they are already familiar with and use everyday" (2008, 164). Accessing sites with familiar tools not only makes youth more likely to engage, it is the key to increasing a site's appearance of authenticity.

Stephen Coleman describes two types of e-citizenship that frame the targeting of youth online for civic engagement: managed and autonomous. Proponents of managed e-citizenship view youth as "apprentice citizens" who need to learn the skills necessary to fulfill their responsibilities as full citizens (Coleman, 2008, 191). He argues that this managed perspective assumes that the Internet is a chaotic space where young people can fall victim to political misinformation and misdirection. Therefore, advocates of managed e-citizenship prefer websites that provide safe, monitored spaces that allow youth to engage in moderated discussion and debate as they learn the duties of responsible citizenship (Coleman, 2008, 191-192). The goal of many managed e-citizenship websites is often to help connect youth to elites in positions of political power.

⁹ Coleman notes that sites which allow young people to create their own content are more likely to be viewed as authentic since attempts to guess at what young people want are usually unsuccessful (2008, 196).

Conversely, promoters of autonomous e-citizenship argue that, in spite of a lack of experience, youth have the political agency to represent their own interests. This position rejects the notion that youth have to learn to become responsible citizens since the definition of engagement can be renegotiated for each new generation (Coleman, 2008, 191). While the unmonitored nature of the Internet causes promoters of managed e-citizenship to advocate safe, controlled spaces for young people, autonomous e-citizenship suggests that the free spaces provided by new media allow young people more creativity to construct their own notions of civic engagement (Coleman, 2008, 192). Rather than a connection to political elites, the goal of autonomous e-citizenship websites is to “encourage a collective consciousness of shared values” (Coleman, 2008, 195).

Gerodimos notes that the managerial approach to e-democracy has resulted in “top down” projects that are modeled on a misperception of youth needs and preferences (2008, 268). For Gerodimos, organizations can develop authentic websites by

[t]ailoring the content or language of a site so as to make it more accessible to a young audience; by adopting a dynamic and youthful design...by providing tools and information that directly relates to young people's everyday lives and real issues; and last by not least by communicating that very intent through the site's mission statement and contextual information (2008, 969).

Just as Xenos and Foot note that young people are skeptical of websites soliciting personal information, technologically savvy youth may be cynical regarding the motivations of a website that only allows for moderated debate on a limited number of issues. As a result, youth are often turned off by highly managed media experiences (Earl and Schussman, 2008, 73).

This literature examined has revealed a number of themes that will help guide this study. The first theme, driven by Bennett and Dalton's research into citizenship norms, is that young people are more likely to reflect characteristics of the self-actualizing or engaged citizen than they are to reflect the dutiful citizen model. Related to this is Norris' argument, which suggests that that youth will display features of the cosmopolitan citizen by organizing more around communities of interest rather than adhering to the geographic boundaries that have traditionally defined citizenship. The second theme derived from the preceding literature review is that young people are skeptical about the authenticity of traditional organizations including politics, media and big business. This theme is based primarily on the findings of Buckingham (1998) who suggests that young people develop cynical attitudes towards authority to help them deal with their own powerlessness. The third theme, based on arguments by Dahlgren, Bers and Rheingold is that new media have the potential to develop civic competencies.

The final set of themes pertain to the conclusions that scholars have drawn surrounding the features necessary for successful civic websites. First, the literature suggests that capacity for interactivity is vital to the success of a civic website (Xenos and Foot, 2008; Montgomery and Gottlieb-Robles, 2006; Mesch and Coleman, 2007). It is further expected that young people are attracted to websites that provide opportunities for information collection and dissemination, organization and networking (Mesch and Coleman, 2007; Dahlgren and Olsson, 2007; Calenda and Mosca, 2007^b). The literature further suggests that website aesthetics and functionality are important to attract young people to websites and to keep them engaged (Thorlacius, 2007; Sutcliffe, 2002; boyd, 2007). Based on information from Barber, Livingstone et al., Street and Scammell, it is

expected that youth are more interested in websites that have popular culture references, celebrity endorsements and opportunities for consumer engagement. The final theme is that a website's perceived authenticity plays an important role in whether young people will engage with it. Further, authenticity results from the role the website's administration plays in managing interaction (Coleman, 2008), and from the connections that are made between participation on the site and real world consequences (Gerodimos, 2008).

New media technologies provide opportunities for civic organizations hoping to connect with young people. The aim of this thesis is to build on studies that analyze the content of civic websites by interrogating the reactions that youth have to these sites. By speaking to young people and developing an understanding of how they define citizenship and what feature they prefer, it will be possible to suggest whether civic organizations with websites are presently offering young people a chance to develop the civic competencies that will eventually lead to increased civic engagement. I attempt to explore the themes outlined above through a series of research questions. The following chapter introduces these research questions and outlines the study's methodological framework.

III. Research Questions and Methodology

Earlier in this thesis, I examined arguments that suggest young people are pulling away from traditional forms of political engagement. Some scholars have suggested that young people, feeling neglected by traditional political institutions are seeking alternate avenues for engagement. My research focuses on how youth understand the concept of citizenship and how they understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens. While other studies have focused on the content of websites, this study is primarily interested in what youth think about website features and how these relate to their understandings of citizenship, rather than the existence of the features themselves.

In order to examine and expand on the themes noted in the last chapter, I conducted online questionnaires and focus groups with undergraduate students at Carleton University. To structure this exploration, I have operationalized these themes with a set of research questions. The first research question addresses the conceptions that youth have of the “good citizen.” The second question asks which civic competencies youth believe are necessary for enacting citizenship. The third question probes the role that the Internet, particularly websites that use Web 2.0 applications, play in developing civic competencies and providing opportunities for engagement. The fourth question asks whether the tools and “calls-to-action” on existing civic websites are attractive to young people. Finally, the study explores young peoples preferences for, and uses of, these online tools.

Twenty-three university students took part in this study.¹⁰ The quantitative questionnaires were useful for gathering aggregate data regarding participants' initial reactions to three civic websites.¹¹ The qualitative focus groups elicit more detailed answers to questions regarding participants' website preferences and understandings of citizenship. Due to the small sample size and choice of methods, the results of this study will not be generalizable to all youth; however, the combination of numerical data and rich narratives is useful for this type of exploratory study.

Recruitment

Participants for this study were recruited from multiple undergraduate programs at Carleton University. By recruiting university students, I have assumed that all participants have regular access to Internet. This assumption can be made based on the fact that students have access to networked computers through their enrollment in the university and are expected to make use of such connections for various assignments. However, by recruiting solely from a university, I have created a somewhat homogeneous sample in terms of level of education and socio-economic status. All participants have some post-secondary education and, despite likely variance in socio-economic status, all participants are able to finance a university education. The digital divide, discussed in the previous chapter, refers to the unequal access to new technologies within society. By

¹⁰ Twenty-four students completed the online questionnaire. However, due to scheduling conflicts, one of those students was unable to attend the focus groups.

¹¹ According to Gerodimos, civic websites are those which focus on "youth engagement and on issue campaigns." These can include: youth forums, youth parliaments and consultation spaces, youth portals and training sites, charities and NGOs, lobbying and campaigning sites (2008, 970)

drawing from a population with largely similar levels of education, wealth, and access to technology, this study does not focus on issues of access.

Initial recruitment for this study was conducted on the basis of stratified sampling from the undergraduate Mass Communication (MCOM) and Public Affairs and Policy Management (PAPM) programs at Carleton University. I visited two large first year courses – the required first year courses in Mass Communication and Public Affairs and Policy Management – and five fourth year seminars, to invite students to participate in the study. After an introduction to the study, interested students were given a letter of information (see Appendix A) and asked to contact me via email if they were interested in participating. Fourteen students responded to this invitation. The ten remaining students were recruited through a combination of snowball sampling and convenience sampling. Students who had agreed to participate in the study were asked to bring friends who were also undergraduate students at Carleton, irrespective of their program or year of study. To ensure adequate numbers for each focus group, undergraduate students known to the researcher were also asked to participate.

The students were not offered academic incentives for their participation; however, they did receive food and beverage during the focus groups and a \$15 gift certificate to the Carleton campus bookstore upon completion of the study. Additionally, the fourth year students in one of the MCOM seminars had the option of conducting focus groups as part of a summative course project. Participation in my study was presented as an opportunity to observe a focus group before facilitating one themselves.

Quantitative Analysis: Online Questionnaire

Quantitative research relies primarily on the acquisition and analysis of measurable data. Traditionally, the goal of quantitative research has been to use the scientific method of enquiry to uncover universal truths. However, the quantitative component of this study consists of an online questionnaire designed to help understand participants' initial reactions to three civic websites. Moreover, the responses obtained in the questionnaire are used to assess changes in responses during the focus group portion of the data collection. The advantages to quantitative research, particularly survey research, are its relative low cost, the potential for anonymity offered to participants, and the reduced risk of research influence on responses (Pickard, 2007, 199). Weaknesses of this quantitative survey research include the potential for low response rates, the bias of self-selection, the chance that complex questions or concepts may confuse participants, and a lack of opportunities to clarify issues (Pickard, 2007, 200). These weaknesses, particularly the last two, will be compensated for through supplementary focus group research.

There are a number of benefits to using multiple methodologies. Often referred to as triangulation, this method is "achieved by using multiple data collection techniques or multiple sources of evidence, or, very commonly both" (Pickard, 2007, 86). Triangulation was originally conceptualized by Webb et al. (1966) for quantitative research and used one method to develop subsequent measures and increase reliability in findings. Triangulation is now common with qualitative research as well (Bryman and Teevan, 2005, 325). The purpose of triangulation is to "collect information from multiple sources but aimed at corroborating the same facts or phenomenon" (Yin, 2002, 92). Methods are

usually chosen that have different strengths so that they compensate for each other's weaknesses.

One of the most common concerns regarding triangulation is that the different methods used often draw on opposing epistemological and ontological underpinnings, making them theoretically incompatible. However, scholars have begun to move away from the position that methods are shrouded in epistemological and ontological commitments towards a perspective that "methods themselves should be viewed as mere tools for collecting data" (Grix, 2001). In this case, the use of a quantitative online questionnaire does not disrupt the interpretivist epistemological groundings of the study. While the quantitative results were used to guide focus group discussions and support findings in the qualitative research, the majority of the study's analysis was conducted on the qualitative data collected. Further, no attempt has been made to recruit a representative sample of Canadian youth – although, recruiting participants with varying university experience from different programs was intended to widen the range of viewpoints explored in the study. Therefore, the quantitative data collected in this study acts as an accompaniment to the qualitative data rather than as an attempt at uncovering universal truths about online civic engagement practices.

It is most common for qualitative research to precede quantitative research. Qualitative research can facilitate quantitative research by providing hypotheses and directing question selection and measurement for questionnaires (Bryman and Teevan, 2005, 325). In this study, however, the qualitative research followed the quantitative research. The quantitative questionnaire was used primarily as an opportunity for participants to familiarize themselves with the websites used in the study. Additionally,

the questionnaire results provide information about the initial reactions participants had to the websites prior to the group discussion. This is important because group discussions often discourage individuals from voicing unpopular opinions. Moreover, the questionnaire serves as a baseline of responses that can be further interrogated during the focus group. Triangulation has become more acceptable as there has been “a growing preparedness to view research methods as techniques of data collection less by epistemological and ontological baggage” (Bryman and Teevan, 2005, 330).

Other scholars have used quantitative methods to study online civic engagement. Calenda and Mosca (2007^a and 2007^b) used questionnaires to assess whether individuals’ use of the Internet is shaped by their offline behaviours. The authors surveyed students at Italian universities to test their hypothesis that online behaviour is merely reflective of offline behaviour. Raynes-Goldie and Walker used an online questionnaire to discover how youth are using “online civic, community, or activist sites” including TakingITGlobal.org (2008, 162).

The questionnaire for this study was designed and administered using online survey software called *Survey Gizmo*. Participants were asked to navigate three websites and answer questions regarding their reactions to the sites.¹² Participants were asked questions regarding each website’s informational tools, organization and networking opportunities, interactive tools and opportunities for creative expression, popular culture references, opportunities for consumer activism and aesthetic appeal. The questions were designed primarily using the Likert scale model. Participants were also asked a number of

¹² Further discussion of the selected websites is found later in this chapter.

demographic questions that helped evaluate their level of traditional political participation, voluntary involvement and news consumption habits.

The questionnaire was designed to take approximately 25 minutes. Participants received an email with the link to the questionnaire once they had acknowledged an interest in participating in the study. They were asked to complete the questionnaire (see Appendix B) before midnight on the day before their focus group was scheduled to take place. Completion of the questionnaire required a computer with Internet access and was undertaken individually by the research participants on their own time.

Qualitative Analysis: Focus Groups

The goal of qualitative research is to uncover patterns through observation and analysis of a social phenomenon. Qualitative analysis does not have a goal of generalization; rather, it focuses on contextual analysis. This study uses focus groups to help explore in greater detail the findings from the online questionnaire. The value of using focus groups in addition to questionnaires is that “in a group situation many people are prompted to say or suggest ideas which may not occur to them on their own” (Gorman and Clayton, 1997, 142 as quoted in Pickard, 2007, 220). Focus groups usually consist of “a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research” (Powell, Single and Llyod, 1996, 499 as quoted in Pickard, 2007, 219). Focus groups are particularly valuable for exploratory research such as this because they allow for the examination of a topic to establish the issues that warrant further investigation (Pickard, 2007).

There are a number of advantages to using focus groups for research. The primary advantage is that focus groups allow the researcher to gather information from a number of sources at one time (Pickard, 2007, 219). A second advantage is that they provide the “richest source of knowledge about people’s understanding of themselves, and the life around them” (Wellington and Szczerbinski, 2008, 91). This insight is particularly advantageous when studying a social phenomenon. The final advantage is that the focus group “sets up a situation where the synergy of the group, the interaction of its members, can add to the depth or insight of either the interview or a survey” (Wellington and Szczerbinski, 2008, 89).

Focus groups also have important disadvantages, the prevalence of which often depends on the skill of the moderator. Due to the number of participants, moderating focus groups involves the management of personalities. Problems arise when the moderator loses control of the discussion. Wellington and Szczerbinski describe some of the typical problem personalities encountered in a discussion group: “the maverick voice or the long monologue; dominant individuals who may monopolize the interview or invisibly ‘threaten’ the others by their presence; the reduction in time devoted to each individual; the person who is afraid to speak in a group” (2008, 88). Focus groups provide insight into the way people understand their social worlds. The disadvantage of this is that our “personal narratives are shaped by our desire to maintain high self-esteem, make sense of (often random) events and reduce the cognitive dissonance between conflicting pieces of information” (Wellington and Szczerbinski, 2008, 91). For this reason, focus groups should only be interpreted as narratives rather than universal facts. Additional limitations of focus groups include the possibility of group think – when

people tend to coalesce unnaturally around a dominant opinion. Further, the group setting can cause people to be more critical or analytical than they would normally be. These last two limitations will be discussed further in chapter four.

Other scholars have used qualitative methods to study online civic engagement. Xenos and Foot used focus groups to study young people's reactions to online political campaigns. The authors subscribed to an online fundraising event hosted by Senator John McCain during the 2000 campaign for the Republican presidential candidate. The event was broadcast to the focus group on a large projection screen (Xenos and Foot, 2008, 54-55). The focus group participants were invited to comment on the effectiveness of the online campaign. Another example of a study that utilized qualitative methods is Coleman's examination of an e-citizenship project, which relied upon semi-structured interviews with key actors involved in running the citizenship projects' online operations (Coleman, 2008).

For this study, I conducted five focus groups each with three to six participants.¹³ Bryman and Teevan (2005) note that six to ten participants is often the standard focus group size. However, smaller groups are often recommended when the group will be dealing with complex or sensitive issues, or when the researcher is interested in eliciting personal accounts (Bryman and Teevan, 2005, 196). To the extent possible, the focus groups were designed so that participants had similar academic experience. In only one case was a first year student participating in a group with predominantly third and fourth year students.

¹³ A copy of the focus group guide is included as Appendix C.

The focus groups took place in a small conference room in the School of Journalism and Communication at Carleton University. This room had three laptops, one of which was hooked up to a LCD projector. The focus group consisted of a discussion of citizenship followed by an in-depth discussion of the websites that research participants viewed for the online questionnaire portion of the study. At the conclusion of the focus group, the participants were asked to rank the importance of six website characteristics – information, interactivity, organization and networking, popular culture consumer engagement and aesthetics. The same question had been asked in the online questionnaire and the follow-up was intended to reveal possible changes in opinion after the focus groups.

Participants were given an opportunity to reacquaint themselves with the websites before they were discussed in the groups. The computer hooked up to the projector was also available to any participant wishing to demonstrate a specific feature of the website to the group. The focus groups took between 75 – 90 minutes hours to complete. Only research participants who completed the online questionnaire participated in the focus group.

The Websites

For this study, I selected three websites for analysis: *Taking IT Global: HIV / AIDS*, *YouthAIDS* and the *PRODUCT^(RED) Campaign*. All the selected websites focus on the global issues of HIV/AIDS. The decision to select one over-arching theme for all three websites was made so that participants were not attracted to one website over another based on their personal interest in a topic. The websites were identified based on

an Internet search of the terms “Youth” and “AIDS.” The three websites were selected based on the following criteria:¹⁴

- The website is entirely or partially aimed at youth
- The website is designed to encourage civic engagement
- The website is operational for the duration of the study
- The website is written in English

The following is a brief description of each website.

TakingITGlobal

Michael Furdyk and Jennifer Corriero started TakingITGlobal.org (TIG), now one of the world’s largest civic engagement websites, in 1999 as a grassroots networking tool. The site offers opportunities for networking through blogs, discussion boards and personal profiles. Raynes-Goldie and Walker report that the website now has over 130,000 members from 200 countries (2008, 263). Information is provided on a number of social issues through links to other websites and organizations. AIDS is one of many topics of discussion on the website and is included in the site’s Health and Wellness section. Funding for the website comes from private donations as well as a number of corporate sponsors, referred to as “supporters.” Some of the site’s core supporters include Microsoft, Cisco, Adobe and RBC Financial Group. In addition, TIG receives financial backing from private foundations such as The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The Ontario Trillium Foundation and The Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation (TakingITGlobal.org, 2008).

¹⁴ These criteria are adapted from the criteria developed for the Raynes-Goldie and Walker (2008) study of TakingITGlobal.org

The site is based on the vision that “[y]outh everywhere are actively inspired, informed, and involved in shaping our world” (TakingITGlobal.org, 2008). Website creators believe the Internet offers tools to help youth improve their local and global communities through facilitated learning. The site’s tagline is “Inspire. Inform. Involve.” and the mission of the website is to “provide opportunities for learning, capacity-building, cross-cultural awareness, and self-development through the use of Information and Communication Technologies” (TakingITGlobal.org, 2008). TIG “embeds its social-networking tools within the context of civic engagement and activism by providing relevant resources and informational tools (organization databases, issue directories, etc.)” (Raynes-Goldie and Walker, 2008, 164). By allowing users to generate a large part of the site’s information – through discussion boards, blogs and visual media – the site is an example of Coleman’s “autonomous website” design.

The site itself is colourful and rich with information. There are links across the top of the page that give users a number of options including: connecting with other users through social networking tools; taking action through the use of action guides;¹⁵ searching petitions and ongoing projects; and researching issues. This information on the site is both generated by users and provided by TIG staff. The various social issues that TIG focuses on are listed down the side of the page. A search function is clearly labeled in the top right-hand corner of each page. The content of the page includes links to resources within TIG and resources elsewhere on the web.¹⁶

¹⁵ Action guides or organizational toolkits are resources to help people take action on issues. They often provide advice on how to plan an event, information about existing organization and links to additional information sources.

¹⁶ Page shots of the TakingITGlobal.org website are included in Appendix D.

YouthAIDS (Population Services International)

YouthAIDS is the AIDS education program for Population Services International (PSI), an international non-profit organization. The site's mission is to use "media, pop culture, music, theatre and sports to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS and reach 600 million young people in more than 60 countries with life-saving messages, products, services and care" (YouthAIDS, 2008). YouthAIDS was founded in 2001 by Kate Roberts and now has a multi-million dollar operating budget (YouthAIDS, 2008). The funding for YouthAIDS comes primarily from PSI and corporate partners including, Aldo, Cartier, America Online, MAC Cosmetics and the Discovery Channel. The site has a strong emphasis on education, awareness and participation. The site lists HIV/AIDS testing locations as well as statistics about HIV/AIDS prevalence around the world. It also has a comprehensive toolkit for young people looking to get involved by becoming "student ambassadors" – youth who inform others about the importance of HIV/AIDS and help organize fundraising events. The content of this website is almost entirely controlled by the website designer, making YouthAIDS an example of Coleman's "managed website."

Prior to starting YouthAIDS, Roberts worked in publishing and marketing. Based on her experience in these industries, Roberts wanted to build an organization that would sell HIV/AIDS prevention. Roberts argues that in a consumer driven society, celebrities are necessary to make people stand up and take notice of an issue stating "[i]t's a sad state of affairs when you have to make it [condom use] sexy, bring in Hollywood, but you do" (quoted in Strauss, 2004, C01). The YouthAIDS 2008 campaign focuses on the power of music to unite. The website states:

[m]usic is a common denominator that connects people all over the world. Often able to transcend culture and language barriers, music is a thread

woven throughout our shared humanity. YouthAIDS recognizes the transformative power of music and in particular, music's unique ability to reach young people with life-saving messages of hope (YouthAIDS, 2008).

To this end, the site features a number of musicians and celebrities – including actor Ashley Judd and rapper Ludacris – in the celebrity ambassador section. The organization also has a number of corporate partners, some of whom sell products that help support AIDS education. The option to donate is presented on the majority of pages within the YouthAIDS site. Despite this prevalence of celebrities and corporate culture, the site emphasizes education and awareness first. Most of the information on celebrity ambassadors and corporate partners is one or two mouse clicks away from the homepage.¹⁷

(PRODUCT)^{RED}

The (PRODUCT)^{RED} campaign is an initiative started by Bono, the Irish-born lead signer of U2 to raise money for DATA (Debt, AIDS, Trade, Africa) – the organization he co-founded in 2002, to fight poverty and AIDS in impoverished nations. The (PRODUCT)^{RED} logo is a brand licensed to partner organizations. These organizations offer products, at no additional cost to the consumer, from which the proceeds are donated to organizations providing retroviral drugs and other supports for people living with HIV/AIDS. In its RED(IDEA) section, the website states that

(RED) is not a charity.
 (RED) is not a cause.
 (RED) is for a theory.
 (RED) is an ingenious idea that unites our incredible collective power as consumers with our innate urge to help others.

¹⁷ Page shots of the YouthAIDS website are included in Appendix E.

(RED) is where virtue and desire meet ((PRODUCT)^{RED}, 2008).

(PRODUCT)^{RED}'s partners include brands like Starbucks, Apple, American Express, Converse and Emporio Armani. Each corporate partner sells select (Red) products, of which up to fifty percent of the proceeds go directly to Africa where the money is spent on a everything from antiretroviral treatment to HIV rapid test treatment to training for medical staff ((PRODUCT)^{RED}, 2008). Unlike TIG and YouthAIDS, which describe themselves as not-for-profit organizations, (PRODUCT)^{RED} describes itself as a "business model designed to create awareness and a sustainable flow of money from the private sector into the Global Fund, to help eliminate AIDS in Africa" ((PRODUCT)^{RED}, 2008).

The (PRODUCT)^{RED} website itself is dominated by multimedia applications. Images flash across the screen and pop up as the mouse rolls over them. The site has a number of opportunities to watch news clips and celebrity interviews. There is also a blog that provides updates on (PRODUCT)^{RED} activities and often includes embedded multimedia clips. The main feature of the site is the "Shop" section. In this section, users can browse all available (RED) products and purchase them online. There are limited educational opportunities on the site including a section explaining the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa and some solutions. The "Take Action" section offers opportunities to join the Red Campaign, which provides access to information about news and products. Users are also invited to "(RED)-ify yourself" by downloading computer wallpaper, email signatures and instant message icons ((PRODUCT)^{RED}, 2008). The dominant message on the site is that buying (Red) products is a way to help combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic in

Africa.¹⁸ The content of the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site is entirely controlled by the website designer making it another example of Coleman's "managed website" design.

Website Features

The features of each website were categorized based on their functions and evaluated by the participants. Table 1 contains a list of website features and indicates which of the three sample sites contained the various features.

Table 1 Website Features

	TakingITGlobal	YouthAIDS (PSI)	(PRODUCT) ^{RED}
Information			
<i>Newsletters/E-newsletters</i>	X	X	
<i>News information / articles</i>	X		
<i>Statistics / Quick facts</i>	X	X	
<i>Guide to action / Information on getting involved</i>	X	X	
<i>Books</i>	X		
<i>Media Section</i>		X	X
<i>Testing information</i>		X	X
<i>Donation information</i>		X	
<i>Email notifications</i>			X
Organization and Networking			
<i>List of events/projects</i>	X	X	X
<i>Organizational toolkits</i>	X	X	
<i>Social networking</i>	X		
<i>Join online communities</i>		X	
Interactive Tools			
<i>Pictures</i>	X		
<i>Multimedia (e.g. video)</i>	X	X	X
<i>Blogs</i>	X		X
<i>Discussion groups</i>	X		
<i>Petitions</i>	X		
<i>Links to other sites / Tools to send links</i>	X	X	X
<i>Submit your story</i>		X	
<i>Quizzes</i>		X	X
Popular Culture			
<i>Notable quotes</i>	X		
<i>Celebrity Ambassadors</i>		X	X
Consumer Engagement			
<i>Order HIV/AIDS paraphernalia</i>		X	X

¹⁸ Page Shots of the Youth AIDS website are included in Appendix F.

The *information* category refers to the tools that allow for the collection of information. The *organization and networking* category refers to opportunities that users have to network with other users through the website or to organize for offline events. The *interactive tools* category refers to opportunities that users have to influence site contact, create online protest tools, watch multimedia and engage in creative expression. *Popular culture* references include primarily mentions of celebrities. Finally, *consumer activism* includes any opportunity given to site users to buy products that support the HIV/AIDS cause. The websites were also rated on their *aesthetic appeal* and their *functionality*.

In this chapter, I have outlined the research questions that emerged from a review of the literature on citizenship and civic engagement. Further, I have reviewed the methodological processes that guided the research. In the following section, I outline the results of the research and begin to analyze these results as they relate to the research questions outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

IV. Results and Analysis

The purpose of this thesis is to help understand the complex relationship between youth and civic engagement. Further, I explore the role that new media may play in helping young people to develop civic competencies and allowing them to network with others based on shared interests. Despite trends of declining voter turnout and political party membership, it is not sufficient to conclude that youth are apathetic. The young people involved in this research engaged in rich conversations concerning their roles as citizens and their opinions of the three websites presented to them. They were particularly animated in their discussions surrounding the importance of voting and the benefits of popular culture and consumer activism to promote civic issues.

This chapter provides a discussion of the results from the online questionnaire and focus groups. I begin by profiling the research participants. Following this, I outline the results of the research – beginning with a discussion of citizenship and civic engagement, followed by the preferences that the participants outlined when discussing the three sample websites. Throughout this chapter, I will draw connections to the research questions to help determine how these young people understand their roles as citizens and whether or not the three websites presented help them achieve their civic goals.

Research Participants

Educational Demographics

As noted in the methodology section, all the study's participants were undergraduate students at Carleton University. Table 2 identifies the academic year of the participants.

Table 2 Academic Standing of Participants

Year	Count (n)	Percent (%)
1 st year	6	25.0%
2 nd year	5	20.8%
3 rd year	4	16.7%
4 th year	9	37.5%

Q: Please indicate your current year of study.

The higher percentages of first and fourth year students can be attributed to the fact that students were initially recruited from first and fourth year courses. Students were recruited from these years because I was interested in the differences that may exist between youth at different life stages and with different academic experience. The student participants also came from a variety of disciplines (shown in Table 3). Once again, the higher proportion of students from Mass Communication and Public Affairs and Policy Management can be attributed to specific recruitment from these programs.

Table 3 Participants' Programs of Study

Program	Count (n)	Percent (%)
Mass Communication	10	41.7%
Public Affairs and Policy Management	4	16.7%
History	3	12.5%
Other ¹⁹	7	29.2%

Q: Please indicate your current program.

Civic Engagement

In terms of voting, the young people included in this study were more active than their peers, on average. Table 4 shows the results when participants were asked if they had voted in the federal, provincial and municipal elections prior to the study. While 13 of 20, or 54.2% of the study's eligible participants reported voting in the Federal Election prior to the study, Elections Canada reports that only 39% of Canadian youth ages 18 to

¹⁹ The "other" category includes students from English, Humanities, Journalism, Law, Political Science, Science and Sociology.

21½, and only 35% of Canadian youth ages 21½ to 24, voted in the 38th General Federal Election (Elections Canada, 2005).

Table 4 Voting by Participants

	Yes (n)	No (n)	Not Eligible (n)	Prefer not to answer (n)
The most recent federal election	13	7	4	-
The most recent provincial election	13	7	4	-
The most recent municipal election	7	11	5	1
The most recent Carleton University Students Association Election (CUSA)	12	10	-	2

Q: Did you vote in any of the following?

Additionally, three participants reported belonging to a political party and eight said they were members of a nongovernmental organization or charitable group.²⁰

Media Consumption

The participants in this study reflected the trend noted by Dahlgren and Olsson (2007) that youth use online media to supplement traditional media consumption. When asked which media sources they used to receive news, traditional and alternative print media were the most commonly cited sources. However, three-quarters of respondents also reported using online media to gather news (as seen in Table 5). Television and radio remain important sources of information with the number of participants using radio to collect news information outnumbering those using television.

²⁰ Bill Cross notes that, at the turn of the twenty-first century, only one in twenty Canadians between 18 and 30 has ever belonged to a political party (provincial or federal) (2007, 5).

Table 5 Media Sources

Source	Count (n)
Traditional Print Media (Magazines / Newspapers)	22
Alternative Print Media (Magazines / Newspapers)	21
Traditional Media Online (Magazines / Newspapers)	18
Radio	15
Television	13
Online Alternative Newspapers / Magazines	6
Other: Emailings for action	1
Other: Online videos	1
Other: Satellite radio	1
None of the Above	1

Q: Please indicate from which, if any, of the following news sources you get your news (select as many as necessary).

Citizenship

Characteristics of the Good Citizen

To better understand how the civic websites presented to the participants helped promote civic competencies and encourage engagement, each focus group began with a theoretical discussion of citizenship as a concept. The participants were asked what it means to be a good citizen, how important it is to be a good citizen and what tools and skills are necessary in order to be a good citizen. The majority of responses to the question, *what does it mean to be a good citizen*, were reflective of Bennett's (2008) "actualizing citizens" and Dalton's (2008) "engaged citizens." Notions of respect, community involvement, compassion and volunteering were repeated in multiple focus groups. One participant described the importance of community involvement:

I think [it's important] to be actively participating in what goes on around in your community. It's what makes everything work and it doesn't necessarily have to be for pay – it can include jobs, volunteer work. I mean the only way the community continues to strive for things is if you have people participating.

Although participants appeared to reflect the actualizing and engaged citizen perspective, there were a few characteristics of the dutiful citizen that were viewed to be important characteristics of the good citizen. Economic participation was mentioned in multiple focus groups; however, it was not considered central to good citizenship. One participant noted:

I might put contributing to the economy at the bottom or closer to the bottom, just because the economy is kind of the natural cycle and if it is positive, it is just going to happen and you don't have to actively try to boost the economy positively because it kind of works in that way to strive towards positive growth.

Another characteristic of the dutiful citizen that was mentioned in multiple groups was adherence to the law. Dalton (2008) notes that people falling into the dutiful citizen category are more likely to defer to authority – including those in positions of legal power. As with economic participation, however, the students qualified the importance of legal adherence. One participant reflected the importance of questioning the legal system:

I don't think that you necessarily have to be law abiding to be a good citizen. I think that given certain contexts it is, you know, okay to break the law. For example, speeding – which everyone does – I don't think that makes you a bad citizen.

Both Bennett and Dalton noted that the dutiful citizen sees voting as central to democratic participation. During the focus groups, there was debate about the importance of voting to citizenship. Particularly among younger participants, there was some consensus that voting was an important component of citizenship.²¹ When asked what was most essential for good citizenship, one second year participant stated:

²¹ It should be noted that the focus groups were conducted on the day of 2008 Canadian federal election, two days following that election and on the day of the 2008 United States Presidential election. The timing of the focus groups around these important

Voting; just because, if you don't actually vote, if you don't speak your mind, then no one is going to know what you want.

However, some of the older students argued that voting was not central to citizenship. In some cases, participants found the idea of voting limiting because it was only available to a portion of the population. One third year student argued:

...sometimes, you can say a lot more in abstaining from a vote than from voting if you don't agree with the concepts being put forward by candidates or the current political system.

Despite some agreement with the idea that abstaining from voting sends a powerful political message, one participant noted that, particularly in the case of youth, it is difficult to tell who is not voting because they are taking a political stand and who is not voting simply because they are uninformed or do not care.

The notion of informed voting was mentioned in all of the groups. There was consensus, even among those who thought that voting was paramount to citizenship, that an uninformed vote was worse than no vote at all. Summarizing this view that emerged in each group, one participant noted:

I think I would much rather have somebody go to the polls and be knowledgeable on the issues and vote for someone because they know where they stand on the issues versus just going to the polls and voting for a party that their parents support or something like that...I think that maybe you would be a good citizen if you were uneducated and you abstained from the election.

electoral dates means that voting may have been top of mind for the participants where it might not have otherwise been on their radar.

Cosmopolitan Citizenship

In most of the focus groups, participants suggested that they belong to multiple communities. In the younger groups, this notion of multiple citizenships manifested itself as the movement between successive communities. For example, one student noted:

I'm in second year and I lived in residence last year and so definitely last year, the Carleton community was the number one community. But now living off campus I can definitely see that Ottawa Central or Ottawa Centre is... I see that more as my community because that is where I live... But then there is definitely going home for the summer, I'm from [location] so then going back there, I will feel like that's my community.

This description of geographically-based communities was common among participants.

Cosmopolitan citizens reflect notions of communities of interest where people unite around ideas. These participants, however, did not mention issues as a possible basis for citizenship or community formation. Further, younger participants were more likely to suggest, as the quote above describes, that they could only belong to one community at a time since these communities were based on their present geographic location. Although these participants described belonging to multiple local communities, they did not express any relationship to a broader, global community.

Among the older students, however, there was more of a discussion of global citizenship. One student noted that her citizenship in another country combined with political activism in Canada, made her a global citizen. Another student noted the role that technology has played in enhancing global citizenship:

Well, something that I just thought is that you are not just a citizen of a country you are a citizen of a local community, you are a citizen of a country. We are also now global citizens with, you know, technology.

During this discussion of global citizenship, participants noted the importance of building communities that transcend geographic boundaries to solve global problems.

One indication that participants were not fully committed to the idea of cosmopolitan citizenship, however, occurred in the treatment of the problem of HIV/AIDS. Only one participant registered concern over the fact that AIDS was being treated as an “African issue” by the websites. For the most part, however, participants were willing to treat AIDS as a foreign issue. One participant notes that the TakingITGlobal site contains

...sub-issues that are really really pertinent in both the issues of AIDS and in just African issues in general.

Norris asserts that cosmopolitan citizens identify “more broadly with their continent or with the world as a whole” (2000, 159). Based on this notion, the problem of HIV/AIDS is an issue around which communities of interest could form. In this way, HIV/AIDS becomes a global issue. The participants in this study, however, overwhelmingly treated AIDS as a foreign issue.

Tools and Skills for Citizenship

The final question for participants on the topic of citizenship asked them to identify and evaluate the tools necessary to be a good citizen. Overwhelmingly, the participants identified the capacity for critical analysis as the most important skill for enacting citizenship. Media literacy was also seen as an important tool for citizenship. Students noted the importance of media literacy in being able to distinguish the source of particular information and determine its reliability. In particular, a number of participants mentioned the importance of being able to critically analyze the media they were consuming. One fourth year participant noted:

I think critical thinking is really key to be able to question what you are reading and kind of take your own point from that...especially with the Internet, I mean, you can really find a ton of information and really varied options and it's not just mainstream opinions that are presented.

A discussion surrounding the role of the Internet plays in news gathering, led participants to discuss the importance of “technocratic literacy,” described as the ability to use new technology.

When asked where they developed the skills for critical analysis, the majority of participants pointed to the education system. In fact, some of the participants suggested that the education system has a responsibility to teach students to take a critical approach to information. One participant noted:

Well I definitely think that it [critical analysis skills] should be incorporated into high school because in elementary school you get a base of knowledge you use. But once they get to high school, children should be taught critical analysis skills. Then at university, if you are not using your critical analysis skills, you really shouldn't be there.

This view that critical analysis should be a fundamental component of education at all age levels reflects the consensus within the groups. However, a number of students argued that a critical understanding of the issues was not sufficient for citizenship. For these participants, good citizenship included the ability and desire to discuss issues with others:

I also think that once you are aware of the issues, you should be able to really analyze them and have a discourse. Not just a private discourse, but you should be able to contribute to a public discourse. And that can range from anything from the right to protest, to petitions, to just like having talks with people about it, you know? Not just passively absorbing information that you receive.

Other participants noted the importance of inspiration and motivation to use the skills they have as citizens to be involved. Participants cited anecdotal evidence from

their own experiences that suggested the tools to be good citizens were not enough to ensure good citizenship practices. They argued that there also has to be some level of interest and a motivating factor that encourages people to act. When asked where that motivation or inspiration comes from, most of the participants agreed that, once again, educational institutions could inspire action from citizens. One student stated

...school doesn't just give you the education, but it gives you the inspiration to want to do something...So if school shows you an organization and you get really into that organization and you learn about it and you want to make a change because you've learned about it at school and they've inspired you.

One participant qualified the importance of educational institutions by suggesting that motivation does not necessarily need to come from schools. She suggested that the skills learned in the workforce also provide the necessary analytical skills and motivation to engage in active citizenship. The participants further argued that having an open mind and being curious were important to citizenship.

One group took a different approach to the source of inspiration and motivation. They suggested that vested interests and the activities of peers are the best sources of motivation. They suggested that a network of engaged peers is more likely to make people interested in being involved themselves. However, this group also noted that engagement often occurs only when one's lifestyle is threatened. They suggested that, in a strong democratic system like Canada's, such threats rarely occur. One participant used the 2008 Canadian federal election as an example of this point:

It seems like people are more likely to, or are inclined to get involved and really care if their lifestyle or their wellbeing are really threatened. But if the Conservatives win – or even if the NDP or Liberals win – I dunno, it's not going to crazy, crazy effect people's lives in Canada.

This outlook represents the cynical approach to organized politics outlined by Buckingham (1998). The idea that all parties are pretty much the same and none will have a dramatic impact on the lives of young citizens, is a skeptical – and possibly realistic – approach for young people to take to politics. Finally, it is important to note – as one participant did – that consumer activism was not included on any of the lists of what it means to be a good citizen. The fact that, even after looking at two websites that incorporated opportunities for consumer activism, this was absent from all conversations surrounding citizenship, suggests that these young people generally do not think of consumer activism as an important component of citizenship.

Discussion of Website Features

Information

Out of all the website characteristics considered in this study, the quality and accessibility of the information on each website was consistently the most important feature for participants. The participants were asked to rank website features both in the online questionnaire and at the end of the focus groups. Table 6 shows the ranking result in the online questionnaire.

Table 6 Website Feature Rank (online questionnaire)

Absolute Rank	Feature	Average Rank
1	Information	2.0
2	Aesthetics	3.0
3	Interactive Tools / Creative Expression	3.3
4	Organization / Networking	3.8
5	Consumer Activism	4.3
6	Popular Culture	4.5

Q: Considering all of the website features we have outlined in this questionnaire, please rank them in order of importance to a civic website where one (1) is most important.

Table 7 shows how these same website features were ranked at the end of the focus groups.

Table 7 Website Feature Rank (after focus group)

Absolute Rank	Feature	Average Rank	Change in Absolute Rank
1	Information	1.3	=
2	Organization / Networking	3.0	↑
3	Aesthetics	3.2	↓
4	Interactive Tools / Creative Expression	3.6	↓
5	Popular Culture	4.9	↑
6	Consumer Activism	5.0	↓

Q: Considering all of the website features we have outlined in this questionnaire, please rank them in order of importance to a civic website where one (1) is most important.

Not only was information ranked as the most important website feature at the beginning and the end of the study – the only feature that did not change in ranking – but its importance actually went up after the focus group discussions. Throughout the focus group discussion on each website, participants often returned to the site's information to support their reasoning for liking or disliking a particular site. Table 8 shows the average score given to each website on the basis of the quality of the information.

Table 8 Information Ranking

Website	Helpful – Average Rank	Likely to Use – Average Rank
YouthAIDS	8.2	7.5
TIG	7.6	6.5
(PRODUCT) ^{RED}	7.1	5.7

Q: Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unhelpful and ten meaning very helpful, how helpful is the information found on this website? Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to use the information found on this website?

The focus group discussion made it clear that information was vital to the success of a civic website. A wealth of information made participants feel like they could explore issues in depth and assess the role that they could play in addressing the problem of HIV/AIDS. When discussing the TIG website, a number of users commented on the

extensive amount of information contained within the site. The (PRODUCT)^{RED} site, however, was consistently criticized for not giving enough information about the problem of HIV/AIDS. One participant stated:

...there is no sort of information on [the (PRODUCT)^{RED}] site as to what they are, what they are doing exactly, or even what AIDS is. You wouldn't go on this site to be informed.

The existence of information that explained the problem of HIV/AIDS and the role this site had in addressing the issue was important to the site's overall attractiveness. This supports Gerodimos' (2008) position that credibility comes from a website's ability to show how the site supports actual social change.

However, participants noted that simply having the information was not good enough. Poorly organized information or an overload of information was found to detract from a site's overall usefulness. The TIG website was criticized for having too much information – a problem that tended to overwhelm, rather than interest, some users. One participant complained:

Information overload. [agreement] If I saw this site, I'd probably close it because I'd be too lazy to read everything. No one wants to sit there and have to actively search through for what they are looking for...it's just too much.

In this case, TIG suffers from the opposite problem as the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site. In some cases, participants noted that the problem was not necessarily too much information. Rather, they found that it was the organization of information that made it overwhelming. One participant noted that, although she had ranked TIG first, she found it hard to find the necessary information:

...I thought that they [TIG] had a lot of information but I found that it was really badly organized and I got easily confused on this site and I couldn't

find my way back. But once I got back to the page, there was a lot of information there. They just really need to organize it a lot better.

TIG is an information-based website. It has opportunities to read the information contained on the site itself, browse information posted by others and link to other websites that contain relevant information. Further, the site is not solely dedicated to the issue of HIV/AIDS. It allows users to research a number of social issues in a number of areas including Peace, Conflict and Governance, Human Rights and Equity, and Technology and Innovation. The popularity of this site often related to people's appreciation of the wealth of information available from this one site on a range of issues. Participants took two approaches to the diversity of information available on the TIG site. In some cases, they appreciated the context that multiple issues lent to their understanding of the problem of HIV/AIDS. One student noted:

I put it [TIG] first as well, but I did it for a different reason...I really don't like it when sites posit everything as existing in a vacuum and I really like how this site, if you just scroll down, there is all the sub-issues...it's not just, AIDS is a problem and we should deal with it. It looks at this as a holistic approach to improve society.

Even this student, however, noted that the TIG site was difficult to navigate and gaining access to the information took a fair bit of patience. Others were more critical about having multiple topics within one site. One argument made in multiple groups was that this approach only allowed the site to deal with each topic at a superficial level instead of interrogating one topic in depth. As one student argued:

...I found that on this site it dealt with many issues but it didn't go into great detail about these issues. It just did a superficial job of a number of issues rather than focusing on HIV and AIDS.

In discussions of both TIG and (PRODUCT)^{RED}, some of the participants were skeptical about the sources of information. Drawing on the earlier discussion about the

importance of critical analysis, a number of participants were concerned with the reputability of the sources used to gather information on each site. In the case of TIG, this concern was mentioned by a small number of participants. They noted that much of the site's information is hearsay, posted by the site's members. One student argued:

I think it's good in a way because it gives unbiased options. It's not just one group saying this is what is and this is what is going on. But at the same time, you have to take everything with a grain of salt because it's kids sitting at their computer telling you this. So, I mean, in a way it gives you a different way of thinking but I don't think some of the things the site said you could take directly word for word.

The concern over issues of the source of information was a larger issue in the case of the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site. A majority of participants expressed concern over the relationship between the information contained on the site and the bottom line of the companies involved. Bennett (2008) noted that younger, actualizing citizens are often skeptical of business and media. This skepticism is demonstrated as participants question the information contained on the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site.

...I don't think I'd ever go to this website [(PRODUCT)^{RED}] if I was doing a project or needed research. Just because I think it's so consumer driven that, I don't know if I wouldn't trust the facts, but I would feel like maybe the main goal is to sell products so I feel like the information might be secondary.

On the other hand, participants were drawn to the statistics and facts reported on the YouthAIDS site. They noted that the inclusion of these hard facts made the site appear professional and reliable. Despite the fact that the information provided on this site is not sourced, participants seemed to find it more credible.

A small number of participants argued that external links could help increase a website's legitimacy by authenticating arguments through other sources. These

participants saw value in including information from different websites in the discussion.

One participant stated:

...the website doesn't have to be comprehensive itself. The links on the website to other useful websites – if someone's already got something done and done well, there's no point in being redundant about it when you can just link to them...It can help you even going to other websites you'll learn more and have a different perspective. So, it kind of helps to fill out the issue.

For some participants, linking to other websites was seen as problematic because it took users away from the principle website and made it difficult to navigate back.

Overall, as seen in Table 8, the participants stated in the online questionnaire that they found the information on YouthAIDS most helpful and the information on (PRODUCT)^{RED} least helpful. They also said that they would be most likely to use the YouthAIDS information and least likely to use the information found on the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site. This reflects the perception that the participants articulated that the YouthAIDS site was professional and reliable. In addition, participants appreciated the direct appeal to youth on the YouthAIDS site, suggesting that such an appeal added credibility to the site. Conversely, the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site was seen to lack credibility by posting information to promote products rather than educating users about the issue of HIV/AIDS.

Organization and Networking

For the purposes of this study, organizing refers to the software tools that help people create or join movements on a particular issue both online and offline. These

include event calendars, interactive calendars²² and guides to action, including organizational toolkits. Networking refers to software tools that allow people to connect with other users. The actual connection can occur online or offline, but is facilitated by online tools. Networking tools allow users to form or join online communities and post or search personal profiles. Dahlgren and Olsson (2007) noted that organizing was vital for young people involved in political movements. When asked the importance of organizing and networking applications during the online questionnaire, study participants gave an average ranking of 3.8 (out of 6) (see Table 6). In the post-focus group ranking question, however, the average ranking climbed to 3.0, placing organizing and networking tools as the second most important website features. This change is surprising considering the discussion surrounding the importance and availability of such tools.

Overall, participants seemed to agree that it was important for civic websites to have opportunities for organizing and networking; however, the discussion surrounding tools for organization and networking focused more on the desire to witness other peoples' interaction rather than wanting to interact themselves. In one exchange, participants noted that they could get a sense of what people around the world thought of an issue by reading conversations between other site users:

Participant #5: ...there are so many different issues. If you are just browsing through each category, you can get a range of ideas about the issues that are happening all over the globe.

Participant #1: And you may be able to find, like, people and groups close to you who are as concerned as you might be, or share your views or whatever. So, it's easy to get connected with it.

²² Interactive calendars are those that allow users to add their own events to a calendar that is accessible to all site users.

Participant #2: And it connects you globally. It has that connect the world feature where you can look at a map and just pick a country or an issue or somewhere around the world, and see their outlook on the same issues.

Participant #3: It also has blogs and journals so you can get other people's perspective on an issue that may be different than yours or may be from a different country or culture.

This excerpt from a broader discussion on the civic benefits of the TIG website, emphasized a point brought up in a number of the groups – there is value in being able to view an issue from multiple perspectives. They suggested that these multiple perspectives help lend credibility to the site and the issue. However, participants overall did not demonstrate a desire to join these discussions.

This idea of legitimacy through multiple perspectives was mentioned in a number of the groups. Students agreed that having people from all over the world contribute to a discussion enhances a site's credibility. One participant noted the importance of a critical mass in promoting civic issues. When discussing the value of social networking tools, she stated:

I think it's better to see and realize how many other people are interested. If you go on Facebook, you see in groups for the YouthAIDS, you can see there are 3 million people part of this group, you think, oh my god, this is big. It makes it seem much more legitimate in a way.

There appeared to be excitement surrounding the idea of organizing and networking, but participants seemed to misinterpret what this entailed. They were more interested in the *capacity* for interaction than they were in *involving themselves* in discussions with other website users. Further, when organizational or networking tools were listed, most of the participants noted that they probably would not be drawn to such features. Despite recognizing the importance of being able to collect opinions from all over the world to make sense of a complex issue like HIV/AIDS, most participants said

that they would be unlikely to actually contribute to any such discussion. This point is illustrated in Table 9.

Table 9 Organizational/Networking Tools Rankings

Website	Helpful – Average Rank	Likely to Use – Average Rank
YouthAIDS	7.8	7.3
TIG	7.0	5.8
(PRODUCT) ^{RED}	6.2	5.4

Q: Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unhelpful and ten meaning very helpful, how helpful are the organizational tools on this website? Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to use the organizational tools found on this website?

In the case of TIG and (PRODUCT)^{RED}, the participants' ranking of how helpful each site's organizing and networking tools are is much higher than their likelihood of using those tools. In the case of TIG, this is likely because the site is devoted primarily to online social networking tools, which many participants viewed as less effective than the organizing tools that allow people to connect with others offline. Montgomery (2008) has noted that an interest in civic issues online has only translated into modest civic activity. Table 9 represents an example of this trend. Even young people who note that organization and networking tools can be helpful in achieving civic goals, suggest that they are not likely to actually use those tools. One participant summed up the feeling of the group well when she was asked if the organizing and networking components of the website were attractive to her:

Not to myself personally, but I'd say to my generation collectively, definitely. We are the technological babies, so I'd say it's important.

This acknowledgement of the importance of global understanding without any real motivation from the participants to involve themselves in it, is an illustration of what Ulrich Beck (2002) refers to as "banal cosmopolitanism." Beck derives the term from

Michael Billig's notion of "banal nationalism" or the repeated showing of national colours, "renewing our national identity and demarcating it from others through a host of everyday routines" (Beck, 2002, 28). Beck argues that these routines have been replaced by the routines associated with banal cosmopolitanism, including listening to music from a variety of cultures and incorporating foreign foods into our everyday diets (2002, 28). Beck argues, however, that this familiarity with other cultures will not necessarily create cosmopolitan or global citizens. He suggests that increased familiarity "need not necessarily stimulate a feeling of cosmopolitan responsibility" (Beck, 2002, 29). The feelings expressed by the participants towards the opportunities for global networking on the TIG website appear to support the notion of banal cosmopolitanism. They are interested in what people around the world have to say about an issue, but they are not necessarily interested in engaging in international networks to solve the problems created by the global epidemic of HIV/AIDS.

Interactivity

A websites' level of interactivity is indicated by the extent to which users can engage with the site's features. This includes the ability to edit or add content – as in the case of blogs, discussion groups, petitions and personal photo or story galleries.

Interactivity, for the purposes of this study, also consists of any multimedia, including video and audio clips, quizzes and free downloads.²³ Despite research suggesting that young people are attracted to sites that allow for high levels of user interaction (Xenos

²³ Websites will often give users the opportunity to download free promotional tools, including "wallpaper" for their computer desktop and ring tones for cell phones.

and Foot, 2008), participants in this study did not cite interactivity as one of the most important features for a civic website. During the online questionnaire, participants gave interactivity an average ranking of 3.3, placing it third in importance. However, after the focus groups, that average ranking went down to 3.6, dropping interactivity to the fourth position.

Overall, participants did not register strong negative feelings toward interactive tools; rather, they thought that they were unnecessary for civic websites. One participant noted that, if people are interested in the subject matter, information should be enough to draw them to the site. A number of students said that they liked the way the stories and photo galleries helped to bring a human face to the issue of HIV/AIDS. Discussing the TIG website, one third year participant said:

Something I thought though was quite nice about it, I think it's our work, photo and story gallery...And also, there were different pieces of art from many countries displaying the plight of AIDS and that was something that, like I said, gives it a more human face. You are not so disconnected when you see children's paintings.

Further, a small number of students noted the potential educational roles for the blogs on each site and for the quiz on the YouthAIDS site. They suggested that these tools could help diffuse stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding the topic.

Overall, the multimedia features, particularly video clips, were far more popular than the interactive features that allowed users to contribute to site content, such as blogs and discussion boards. Video clips, particularly those from YouTube²⁴, were very popular. One participant noted her preference for the YouthAIDS site:

²⁴ YouTube is a video sharing site where users can upload videos and watch videos that other people had uploaded.

I thought it [YouthAIDS] was the most interactive. It had links to YouTube and public service announcements about using condoms and I watched one and it was really funny.

However, the participants in the study were much less interested in blogs and discussion boards. When asked if multimedia, including YouTube clips, were attractive, two participants noted:

Participant #2: Much more than blogging I would say. [lots of agreement] When you can watch something instead of just reading then it helps.

Participant #5: Yeah, myself, I'm much more visual than anything else so I'd say it's beneficial. Certainly more than blogging.

This trend is similar to the one identified in the previous section of people's disinterest in networking online but their willingness to gather information from reading conversations between other people. Both of these trends signify more passive approaches to a medium with extensive opportunities for active engagement. Once again, there was a gap between how helpful participants found the tools and how likely they said they were to actually use them (see Table 10).

Table 10 Interactive Tool Rankings

Website	Helpful – Average Rank	Likely to Use – Average Rank
YouthAIDS	7.7	7.3
TIG	7.2	6.2
(PRODUCT) ^{RED}	7.0	6.0

Q: Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unhelpful and ten meaning very helpful, how helpful are the interactive tools on this website? Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to use the interactive tools found on this website?

The participants did have two concerns about the use of interactive tools on civic websites. The first concern was that advanced technology creates a disconnect between the issue and the problem. Participants thought that multimedia were often used to

entertain website users and they argued that this entertainment was inappropriate considering the seriousness of the issue of HIV/AIDS. When discussing the (PRODUCT)^{RED} website, one participant noted:

I found the (PRODUCT)^{RED} website, it was informative and it had great marketing tactics; it was just very techie and it really disconnected the issue from the technology that they had in the website.

The second concern that participants had was that the interactive features did not necessarily lead to any particular action or change in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. The following exchange surrounding the photo gallery on the TIG website reflects this line critique:

Participant #4: Who is expressing themselves though? I don't know if they suss out kids who are affected by AIDS and get them to paint their representation of AIDS. That would be pretty powerful I'm imagining, but from what it seemed, it seemed that they were just people who had done this for a project. And while they may be affected, good for them, I just...

Participant #3: I just don't see it extending any more to actual activism than just painting the picture and putting it on the wall.

The participants in one focus group were concerned that blog features could actually have a detrimental effect by allowing people to perpetuate stereotypes and untruths without any verification. Despite an overall interest in interactive tools, participants thought that they were unnecessary for a civic website and, in some cases, expressed concern that they might obscure the real issues.

Consumer Activism and Popular Culture

Young people are avid consumers of popular culture. The music young people listen to, the television shows they watch and even the products they buy can help to create and reflect a personal identity. In his discussion of lifestyle politics, Bennett notes

“effective activist political communication increasingly adopts a lifestyle vocabulary anchored in consumer choice, self-image, and personal displays of social responsibility” (*forthcoming*, 2). He argues that attaching a message to a popular corporate brand is a useful way to carry the message across geographic borders (Bennett, *forthcoming*, 2). Similarly, civic organizations often partner with corporate brands to help encourage involvement by young people. Just as relationships with popular brands can have benefits for civic organizations, partnering with popular icons can have reciprocal benefits for the individual celebrity and the organization. While the celebrity benefits from an altruistic image, the organization gains access to a legion of fans. The participants in this study, however, were strongly opposed to the use of celebrity appeals and consumer activism to draw attention to the issue of HIV/AIDS. When asked in both the online questionnaire and at the end of the focus group to rank website features, popular culture and consumer activism were last and second last both times. In the rankings taken after the focus groups, these categories received average rankings considerably below the others (see Tables 6 and 7).²⁵

In this study, references to popular culture consist mainly of celebrity endorsements. Overall, participants found these features to be unnecessary for the websites. They felt that that celebrity appeals did little to advance the issue of HIV/AIDS

²⁵ Focus group participants can be more analytical and critical within the group than they would otherwise be. This may account for the appreciably low rankings for popular culture and consumer engagement after the focus groups. However, the fact that these categories were given low rankings prior to the group suggests a true objection to popular culture and consumer engagement as tools for civic engagement even if the extent to which participants rejected these features may have been exaggerated in the focus group discussions and post-group questionnaire.

and, in some cases, actually reduced the strength of the website's appeal. When discussing the trend of celebrity activism, one first year participant noted:

...people are like oh my god, they took time out of their day...But then there are some, like if local people were to go out and do the same thing, it wouldn't have as much of an impact.

This feeling that the focus on celebrities tends to obscure or relegate local achievement, was mentioned in a number of the groups as a reason to avoid celebrity endorsements. Related to that was a concern over who was benefiting most from celebrity endorsements – those suffering from HIV/AIDS or the celebrities themselves. I will return to this issue later in the chapter.

Despite these concerns, there was limited acceptance that celebrities may be helpful in drawing attention to an issue. Similar to Street's (2002) conclusions, participants noted the ability of music to help attract young people to particular causes. Participants noted that the use of musicians by the YouthAIDS website was a good way to increase people's likelihood of paying attention to the campaign. One participant noted

...using music as a means of change is a good idea to get youth involved.

Another participant pointed to the Live8 fundraiser as an example of an event where music had been used effectively to draw attention to a social issue. As seen in Table 11, participants thought that the YouthAIDS website was most effective at incorporating celebrities into their campaign.²⁶

²⁶The low score of the TIG site is likely due to the fact that TIG makes very little attempt to incorporate celebrity voices into their site. They feature a few, select quotes from prominent people including Bill Gates and Nelson Mandela. TIG does not make use of quotations from celebrities in the field of entertainment.

Table 11 Popular Culture Rankings

Website	Likely to Read – Average Rank
YouthAIDS	7.1
(PRODUCT) ^{RED}	6.5
TIG	6.0

Q: Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to read the endorsements of popular figures on this website?

Participants also conceded that, in some cases, celebrities could help to bring legitimacy to a campaign. However, they noted that the level of legitimacy conferred on a campaign depends largely on which celebrity was being used. This supported Street's argument that, to add legitimacy, the celebrity must have a public persona that matches the goals of the campaign. For example, participants argued that Bono was likely the most credible celebrity voice on the issue of HIV/AIDS. Articulating this point, one participant noted:

...if we are talking about celebrities giving it credibility, I think for (PRODUCT)^{RED} I saw Bono on there and Bono is just the guy who goes around taking on causes. So, I think having his association is much more powerful than Ashley Judd or Ludacris, because that's a very specific segment of the population that appeals to, whereas Bono is known fairly internationally as an icon who actually tries to take those issues to heart.

Even though the YouthAIDS site has far more celebrities on their website,

(PRODUCT)^{RED}'s association with Bono was perceived as particularly important for increasing credibility.

Generally, the participants in this study expressed an aversion to the inclusion of celebrities in campaigns. One participant noted:

I did not like the focus on all the celebrit[ies]...like Ashley Judd Global Ambassador. I don't necessarily care about that...to me it's not about the celebrity, it's about the issue.

However, the participant conceded that, if a celebrity is able to bring attention to an issue, it might be beneficial to include them despite their tendency to obscure the realities and seriousness of the issue. Participants had a similar aversion to consumer activism. They argued consumer activism takes advantage of people's obsession with material possessions without attempting to educate them about the real issues at hand. One participant stated

...the problem I have with it [(PRODUCT)^{RED}] is that the products take away from the message and discredit it almost.

Moreover, participants rejected to what they saw as the branding of issues for profit. One participant noted that:

...it's just the branding of the issue instead of people actually being concerned with the cause and taking it to a level that might actually help people.

In a number of cases, participants were skeptical that the money would be going to help people in Africa living with HIV/AIDS.

The primary difficulty participants expressed regarding consumer activism was the inability to reconcile consumerism with good citizenship practices. For many of the participants, there was a disconnect between purchasing a product and making a real difference in the area of HIV/AIDS. This finding does not support Scammell's (2003) assertion that consumers incorporate their responsibilities as citizens into their purchases. This skepticism might be related to the concern over how much of the money spent on each product would actually reach those in need of assistance. One student objected to the slogan posted on the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site:

...there is another tag line I saw on there is "Where desire and virtue can finally meet" or something like that. I think that there, it's like taking desire and your greed, or not greed, but just to have stuff like people's

want and adding that with virtue. It's just two conflicting ideas that don't make sense and I feel that whole website is kind of a confliction [sic] between capitalism and stewardship.

Moreover, participants noted that tools to educate people on the issue of HIV/AIDS were ostensibly missing from the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site, creating further disconnect between consumption and action. Additionally, participants noted that consumer activism does not represent a sustainable solution. One student noted:

I don't want to take anything away from what they are trying to do in the sense that they are actually raising a lot of money for it [HIV/AIDS], but it's not solving the problem; it's just putting a band-aid over the problem.

However, there was some sense that, if a website is going to engage in consumer activism, the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site is the best model. While the YouthAIDS site offers one opportunity to contribute money by buying a metal cuff bracelet, (PRODUCT)^{RED} is designed to allow people to contribute through a number of established companies. The participants noted that, if a site is going to engage in consumer activism, it should dedicate itself entirely to this form of civic activism. There was a preference to see consumer activism separated from the “real” forms of engagement. This is one explanation for the results in Table 12, despite the seeming unpopularity of the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site.

Table 12 Consumer Activism Rankings

Website	Likely to Use – Average Rank
(PRODUCT) ^{RED}	6.6
YouthAIDS	6.2
TIG	N/A

Q: Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to order something from this website?

For all the skepticism towards consumer activism as a means of civic engagement, in the majority of the groups, participants made one concession: they argued

that, if there is a product that you were already going to buy, then you might as well buy it from the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site, so that at least some of the money would go towards alleviating the problem of HIV/AIDS. There was consensus around this idea in a number of the focus groups. One participant articulated this idea noting:

But at the same time, if you are going to buy an iPod anyway and you are going to buy a red iPod instead of a blue iPod, and some of the money is going to go, then I mean, it's not such a bad thing I don't think. So, if you are going to buy the products anyway, it's great that at least they are doing something. But I think citizenship, I wouldn't put this website under that category.

Despite this concession, the groups tended to agree that this type of consumer activism should not be considered among the actions of a good citizen.

One of the largest concerns that participants had regarding consumer activism and celebrity engagement was that the issue of HIV/AIDS was being used to help create or improve an image. The majority of the groups noted that it has become trendy – for individuals, celebrities and companies – to appear concerned about social issues.

Participants were concerned that the incentive to buy or sell HIV/AIDS-related products or to attach one's name to the issue was to enhance one's own image rather than promote significant social change. This position offers further support of Buckingham's notion of cynical chic – that young people are skeptical about the motives of others.

In the case of consumers, participants suggested that people are inclined to buy products that will suggest to others that they are deeply committed to social issues even if they are not. When discussing the value of purchasing products from the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site, one participant stated:

Maybe it can give you the illusion that you are being a better citizen. It makes you look like you are socially aware. It gives people the illusion that you do care about things. You are wearing a Red t-shirt, you have a

Red iPod, you're...you do care about AIDS right? So, it's misleading in that way. But you aren't really doing anything...

The participants had a similar response to celebrities who attach their name to an issue like HIV/AIDS. Although they noted that it might be a mutually beneficial relationship, with the campaigns benefiting from the star-power of the celebrity, participants insisted that celebrity engagement was primarily about the public relations benefits that could result from such partnerships. When discussing the benefits of celebrity activism, one first year student stated:

... it just creates more popularity for them [the celebrities]. It's like they are going out and helping other people with their money. Which is good I guess. It's good that they are doing that, but its kind of just, it's bettering them too because people think, oh they are going out there and spending their time helping fight AIDS and stuff.

The students were even more critical of the companies engaging in socially responsible corporate behaviour than they were of the consumers and celebrities. Aside from questioning how much of the money actually reaches those in need of relief, participants suggested that companies participate only to enhance their images as socially responsible, thus generating additional revenue. Even beyond wanting to create a positive image for themselves, participants suggested that some companies engage in such acts of corporate social responsibility as a way to correct for image problems they might already have. One participant gave the example of Converse, a company that appears on the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site:

I think that they [(PRODUCT)^{RED}] have HP and Converse, I think that's Armani. I think it's just basically trying to put a smiley face on a corporation. For example, Converse, I did a little bit of research on Converse and they had some child labour problems in the past...So now you are just putting a happy face on Converse: 'Oh, but we care for the global community' ...I don't really like that.

Despite these concerns that consumers, celebrities and companies have the wrong motives for engaging with the issue of HIV/AIDS, a majority of the participants recognized the importance of accessibility in a campaign. They acknowledged that many people might not have the time to commit to volunteering for a cause. In those cases, they noted that buying products that donate money to a cause is an easily accessible way to get involved with an issue. One participant noted that, in the case of (PRODUCT)^{RED}:

...it's also very accessible. You can just go to a GAP store and get a Red shirt. Or you can go online and it will get to you within three days. You know? They make it accessible.

Moreover, they suggested that it is important to have a variety of websites that appeal to people at all different levels of involvement. While, TIG is valuable for those who are already engaged with an issue and want to network and organize local or international events, (PRODUCT)^{RED} is valuable because it makes the issues of HIV/AIDS accessible for people who are not necessarily interested in organizing and protesting, but want to have some level of involvement with the issue.

Aesthetics and Layout

For the participants in this study, aesthetics and layout played an important role in the overall effectiveness of the site. Although they were able to see past the aesthetic features to a site's content, some participants were immediately turned off by what they saw as poor website layout. There seemed to be two distinct preferences for website aesthetics. The majority of the participants preferred a clean, simple, stylized site. The (PRODUCT)^{RED} site, with its white background and single images, represents this aesthetic. The alternative preference was for a site that presented all of the information

directly on the site's main page. The TIG website, which has multiple toolbars, links and information all on its homepage, is an example of this aesthetic. These preferences are related to those articulated by danah boyd (2007). She noted the difference between the "clean or modern look" of Facebook contrasted with the cluttered aesthetic of the MySpace site (boyd, 2007). The (PRODUCT)^{RED} site and the YouthAIDS site both had a more stylized look, similar to the Facebook website. Conversely, like the MySpace site, the TIG website had more information packed densely onto each page making the page seem more cluttered.

There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these aesthetic styles. There are benefits for a website that displays extensive information on the first page. Users know right from the beginning the purpose of the website. Some participants also found it easy to navigate the TIG website. Speaking about the layout of the TIG site, one participant said:

I thought the layout was user friendly. Its colourful, I liked that. But it also seems to focus on giving you the information first...If you want more, it's right there....one click away.

However, other participants found the TIG website cluttered and difficult to navigate.²⁷ A number of participants mentioned being overwhelmed by the volume of information available on the home page. Participants complained that when they clicked on links, they got lost and were unable to navigate back to the pages in which they were most interested. The most damning critique was that most participants would not bother to take the time to navigate the site. Articulating this view of the TIG website, one participant stated:

²⁷ TIG has since changed its website to reflect a cleaner, simpler aesthetic.

I put it third. Pretty much entirely because of how it's laid out and trying to navigate between the pages. You look at it and it's so busy. It makes me stressed out and not want to read it. But then when I did read it, the information on this one was definitely the best out of all three. But if I hadn't had to look through it, there is no way I would have because it's just so busy.

At the other extreme, participants noted that the simple, clean aesthetic of the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site was pleasing to look at. They also suggested that its stylized organization made it appear professional and well managed. However, the participants noted that websites can be hurt by the kind of simplicity exemplified by the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site. One participant stated that, if she had just stumbled upon this site, she would have assumed it was the website for a computer manufacture. Another criticism was that the simplicity of the layout hid the information. As one participant noted:

But that simplicity hurts it in the whole information thing we talked about. [agreement] So, you need a happy medium.

This notion that it is necessary to balance aesthetics and function to create a website that people will be attracted to and then stay on, reflects Sutcliffe's (2002) argument that functionality and design are both vital components of any website. For many participants that balance was found on the YouthAIDS site. While the YouthAIDS site had the professional appearance of the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site, it also contained information and visible links to additional information. Discussing the layout of the YouthAIDS site, one participant noted:

I really liked it. I liked how there were the headings and the sub headings and it just seemed pretty well laid out. And it just seemed like if you wanted to find information about one specific thing, it's really easy to find. They have statistics right there...you just go to it.

The participants further appreciated the fact that the YouthAIDS site humanized the issue by including the faces of those affected by HIV/AIDS. Participants felt that this helped bring them closer to the issue itself. They supported Thorlacius' (2007) notion that website aesthetics must match the site's content. Students noted that, while the YouthAIDS site brings a human face to the issue, the other two sites have layouts that are inappropriate to the topic. They noted that the TIG site was too colourful for the topic, which they thought would have been better represented using more somber colours and designs. Further, they argued that the use of technology to entertain users in the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site, divorced it from the issue of HIV/AIDS. Despite the problems associated with the aesthetics of the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site, Table 13 demonstrates that participants far preferred it the TIG site.

Table 13 Aesthetic Rankings

Website	Average Rank
(PRODUCT) ^{RED}	8.1
YouthAIDS	8.0
TIG	6.8

Q: Overall, on a scale from one to ten, where means not at all aesthetically pleasing and ten means very aesthetically pleasing, how aesthetically pleasing did you find this website?

Participants also talked about the ease of navigation as an important component of overall website design. As mentioned earlier, some participants found the TIG website confusing to navigate. However, a small group noted the existence of a search engine within the TIG, which was vital to what they perceived as the site's ease of navigation.

One participant noted:

I really liked how the search engine was really clear at the top. So, everything was really at your fingertips. If you couldn't find something and you were looking for something really specific, you could just type it in right then.

This contributed to the freedom that TIG allowed when searching for information of interest. Conversely, participants noted very specific barriers to navigation on both the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site and the YouthAIDS site. For at least one participant, the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site would not load on her home computer and she had to complete the questionnaire from a different computer. One student also noted difficulty with the top toolbar on the YouthAIDS site. This toolbar would display information but not allow users to easily click on the categories in which they were interested. This participant was clearly frustrated by the experience:

If you leave that bar and try to get all the way over to the far left thing on it, [the toolbar disappears] – that is the worst thing of life. I could not get to anything and it was terribly upsetting. [laughter and agreement]

Further, this participant noted that the design of the site made him feel that he was forced to go to specific pages. He noted that other sites, particularly TIG, gave him the freedom to navigate as he pleased. This was an important articulation of how website design can contribute to impressions of a site as managed or autonomous. In this case, the difficulty navigating the YouthAIDS site gave one participant the feeling that his experience with the site was overly controlled. Overall, this problem with YouthAIDS was minimally intrusive and participants gave the site the best average ranking for user friendliness (see Table 14).

Table 14 Functionality Rankings

Website	Average Rank
YouthAIDS	8.2
TIG	7.5
(PRODUCT) ^{RED}	6.7

Q: Overall, on a scale from one to ten, where one means not at all user friendly and ten meaning very user friendly, how user friendly did you find this website?

The difficulty finding information on the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site, or even getting the page to load, likely contributed to its low ranking for user friendliness. The participants noted that ease of navigation was just as important as the site's overall aesthetics. While the site's aesthetics first attracts them to a particular page, if they experience difficulty navigating the site once they get there, they would close the site and move on.

Robert Putnam (2000) depicts young people as disengaged from democracy, withdrawn from society and hindered from active participation by their technology-rich, fast-paced lifestyles. This type of passive existence certainly does not characterize the group of university students that took part in this study. By and large, they were a well-informed group, interested in contributing their ideas to a discussion of the roles and responsibilities of citizens. They approached each website critically and were very comfortable with the complex software features each site had to offer. However, when asked whether they would use these website if they were looking to engage, many of the participants suggested that, although the websites provided the information and tools necessary for active engagement, they themselves would likely not use them. In the next chapter, I will discuss why these websites, that appear to have all the necessary features to encourage civic engagement, fail to attract young people.

Conclusion

In November 2008, the Public Policy Forum hosted a conference in Ottawa, Ontario entitled, *News & the Netizen: Exploring Democracy through the Relationship between News Media, Technology, and Youth Engagement*. The conference attendees were a mix of academics, business professionals and representatives from government departments. The participants were all united in their desire to understand how new media technologies could be used to encourage youth engagement. The presentations tended to reflect the notion that there is a problem with the engagement levels among young Canadians and that new media provide tools that may offer some solutions. The presentations focused on questions such as: How do we get young people concerned about current events to combat the “interest deficit”? Further, presenters asked, How do we teach young people to be critical of the information that they find online? These questions reflect the continuing trend of managed approaches to new media technologies. They also may help explain why so many efforts to engage young people online continue to fail.

This thesis was designed to explore the use of civic websites by youth and the extent to which existing websites give young people the civic competencies they need to be engaged in civil society. Past studies have focused on the features of civic websites; this study expands this focus by also exploring the preferences that young people have when using civic websites. By combining this with an understanding of how youth perceive their roles as citizens, it is possible to hypothesize why existing civic websites have not been entirely successful in closing the “activation gap” – the disparity between

information and action (Rheingold, 2008, 98). The young people in this study suggest that what is missing is inspiration.

As expected, the participants showed attributes of the engaged or actualizing citizens described by Dalton and Bennett. They thought that respect, community engagement and volunteering were of paramount importance to be a good citizen. However, the participants were much more deferential to authority than expected. They noted that adherence to laws and social norms were also important components of citizenship. Further, while Dalton (2008) and Bennett (2008) both suggest that younger citizens are less likely to see voting as central to democratic participation, many of the young people in this study argued that voting is the most important component of citizenship. Because the group of youth in this study has a higher voting rate than the Canadian average for people between 18 and 24, it is possible that the importance attributed to voting is reflective of their higher level of engagement in the formal political process.

The participants also did not reflect the trend noted in the literature towards cosmopolitan citizenship. Although several of the participants articulated their citizenship as existing beyond the local or national level, none of the participants actually exhibited the traits associated with cosmopolitan citizenship. Where Norris (2000) noted that cosmopolitan citizens are likely to identify with others at a post national level, the young people in this study sought out information related to local issues and networks that allowed them to connect with people close to home. This was one of the only areas where there was a perceptible difference between students with varying degrees of educational experience. In focus groups with younger students, there was no discussion of global

communities and only limited discussion of multiple citizenships. In focus groups dominated by older students, however, there was some discussion that new media technologies have helped create more global citizens. However, even these older students did not talk about cosmopolitan citizenship in terms of uniting around issues to create communities of interest.

Through the online questionnaire and the focus groups, this study revealed the participants' attraction to content-based websites. Where the literature had suggested that youth see interactivity as the basis for determining a website's authenticity (Xenos and Foot, 2008), these young people largely relied on the information contained on the website as a barometer of the website's legitimacy. Basically, if they trusted the information on a site, they trusted the site itself. This group of youth was also unimpressed by the interactive features and networking opportunities that the sites offered. They were more interested in the multimedia features, including web videos, than they were in the truly interactive features, including blogs, discussion boards and social networking opportunities.

Scammell (2003) and Barber (2007) have both made a case for the emerging citizen consumer – those who express their concern for social issues through their purchases. Moreover, Livingstone, et al. (2007) have noted that young people are more likely to follow celebrity stories than they are to follow traditional, hard news stories. However, the participants in this study were not at all interested in consumer activism or celebrity engagement. They were very skeptical of the credibility of information released by corporations. Further, they were cynical of the motives that drove celebrities to attach themselves to social issues. The participants were concerned that companies and

celebrities were using social issues as a way to enhance or repair their image. They extended this concern to individuals who engage in consumer activism, suggesting that purchasing products that advertised a connection to a social issue was more about image formation than true concern for the issue. Bennett suggests that purchasing products that reflect one's civic concerns is a normal part of life style politics. These young people, however, dismiss consumer activism as selfish and distinct from civic engagement. This was the only other area where there seemed to be differences between the younger and older participants. Although the younger participants were more willing to see the benefits of consumer activism, none of the participants were inclined to view consumer behaviour of any sort as an act of citizenship.

In terms of organization and layout, the participants articulated what previous literature has suggested. They noted the importance of having a design that accurately reflects the goals of the website. In some cases, they rejected the colourful layout of the TIG site and the corporate design of the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site as not reflective of the seriousness of the issue of HIV/AIDS. Thorlacius (2007) makes this exact argument – a successful website is one that has aesthetics that support its content and function. Further, the participants supported Sutcliffe's argument that the aesthetics of a website were important to initially attract them to a page, but if the page proved difficult to navigate, they would move on to another site.

The participants' views on the attractiveness of each website's call-to-action were reflective of their feelings regarding the elements of citizenship. For this group of young people, important citizenship practices included being informed about social and political issues, engaging in the community and voting. In none of the five groups was consumer

activism mentioned as a way of demonstrating one's citizenship. Accordingly, once they had determined that the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site's call-to-action was "buy," they were adamant that this was not an inspirational appeal. They noted that the tools for consumer activism were readily available on the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site; however, the site's lack of information meant that it did not contribute to an overall understanding of the issue of HIV/AIDS. Participants did, however, note the importance of accessibility and credited the (PRODUCT)^{RED} site with reaching out to an audience that was interested in supporting a cause, but did not have the time to research social issues or volunteer.

Participants in each of the focus groups decided that "get educated" and "get involved" was the call-to-action for the YouthAIDS site. Consistent with their initial conclusion that education was the most important civic tool, they found this an attractive call-to-action. Participants found the tools on this website very accessible. For example, the steps to becoming a student ambassador were clearly laid out so that anyone with an interest in getting involved was able to. Participants thought that the tools on the YouthAIDS site were well designed to help people achieve the site's call-to-action. Further, they thought that the call to action was practical. This practicality was exemplified for some by the "get tested" link that encouraged people to get tested as a part of their HIV/AIDS education.

The participants decided that the TIG and YouthAIDS calls-to-action were similar. TIG's call to action was awareness, education and involvement. Once again, participants decided that this call-to-action was attractive, a decision in line with their suggestion that education is necessary for involvement. The TIG site had an added emphasis on awareness. A number of students noted this as a strength, since the site

directed users to a number of different causes to broaden awareness on multiple social issues. A number of participants, however, noted that the tools on this site were not as accessible as either (PRODUCT)^{RED} or YouthAIDS. They suggest that people are unlikely to sift through all the information to really educate themselves on an issue. Further, they noted that the effects of the actions related to this site are not as immediate or apparent as the other two sites. This related to Montgomery's (2008) critique that an expectation of immediacy will limit young people's participation in movements that take longer to develop or those where a direct link cannot be drawn between action and outcome.

It should be further noted that many of the tools that assist in civic activities on the TIG site are the same ones that participants said they would not be interested in using. TIG relies on people posting information and creating networks based on interest in social issues. However, these young people said that they would be unlikely to post on a discussion board, contribute to a blog or set up a social networking account. Participants noted that the strength of this site is that it provides important tools to those who are already interested and engaged with a variety of issues; however, they suggest that its dense information and highly participatory tools might be daunting for someone without much knowledge of specific social issues. Surprisingly, the participants seemed to find the most autonomous and interactive website, TIG, intimidating and difficult to navigate. The participants appeared to be more comfortable on the managed sites, which had a more familiar aesthetic and layout. However, these managed sites were unlikely to inspire the participants, in part because of their extensive use of popular culture icons.

The youth in this study ranked information as the most important website feature. They also said being informed was one of the more important characteristics of a good citizen and that critical analysis skills were the most important civic skill. These youth value information and knowledge above all else. They note that education about issues is not only a precursor to action, but is also the source of inspiration. The young people in this study noted that the only thing needed to take them from information to action is inspiration. Getting excited about an issue would encourage them to learn more. A vested interest would motivate them to act. If the goal of organizations concerned with participation in social issues is action, they need to find a way of moving youth from education to action.

This study focused on three websites that promoted civic engagement among youth around the issue of HIV/AIDS. The selection of one issue, although necessary for the purposes of the study, may have had an affect on the participants' responses. The participants reflected an unwillingness to join conversations or post comments, but this may reflect a lack of familiarity with the issues rather than a disinterest in networking generally. Unfamiliarity with the topic may also account for the overwhelming preference for information-heavy websites. In addition, the TIG site required participants to become site members in order to access the truly interactive features. This barrier may also have prevented higher levels of interaction among participants.

The timing of the groups may also have had an affect on the results. All three of the groups took place around the 2008 Canadian and U.S. elections. The fact that elections were likely top of mind for the participants may have encouraged the participants to highlight traditional forms of participation and made them appear more

important than they otherwise would have been. Also, the use of focus groups can lead participants to appear to be more critical than they normally would. The aversion of group members to notions of consumer engagement and celebrity activism may be examples of group think, where participants tend to reflect the ideas of dominant group members.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the group of students recruited for this study cannot be considered representative of Canadian university students, or even Carleton University students. First, the size of the sample is too small to be truly representative. In addition, the reliance on snowball and convenience sampling methods means that many of the participants knew each other. Recruitment from within peer groups can generate a sample that has similar attitudes and opinions. Finally, the participants were self-selected. Of the hundreds of university students that I spoke to, only fourteen originally volunteered to take part in the study. Groups generated through self-selection are often more active than their peers. This might explain the higher levels of political engagement noted in this group when compared to the general population.

This study answers some preliminary questions about the preferences that youth have for online civic engagement. Further studies should consider how youth who are already engaged with an issue perceive websites designed to encourage action and engagement around that issue. In addition, studies should consider what preferences young people have for information presented in a variety of ways including, multi-media videos, discussion board or posts and e-newsletters. Finally, research is needed regarding how youth become inspired to act on an issue.

The findings of this study support the cynical view of new media technologies articulated by Axford (2001). They suggests that, although the potential is there for young people to become engaged online, this group of young people at least, take a passive approach to civic websites. Just as with existing media, they use the Internet to collect and assess information, rather than use it to distribute information, network or organize. The participants in this study noted that the key to action is inspiration. Only when inspired will these young people take the leap from education to action. As one participant put it:

It's not really a skill but you just have to like care. [agreement]. It's just, I dunno, so many people I know just like could participate if they wanted to, but they just don't care.

In multiple focus groups, participants noted that education and information are the primary source of inspiration, which is a prerequisite for action. However, their less-than-enthusiastic responses to these websites suggest that this inspiration is missing. Educational institutions, along with other societal institutions including the media, are responsible for informing the public about civic issues. Websites, particularly those that use Web 2.0 software, provide enhanced opportunities for engagement. It seems, then, that some combination of the two is an appropriate location for inspiration to occur. It is possible that the use of civic website by educational institutions may help bridge the gap between information and action.

Participants agreed that the tools to achieve each website's call to action were readily available. For these young people civic websites must be informative; they should be interactive and have opportunities for networking; and they must be aesthetically pleasing and functional. However, a site with all of these features can still fall short if it

fails to inspire. The final session in the Public Policy Forum's conference on *News & the Netizen* was a roundtable discussion titled, *Looking Through the Demographic Lens*.

Conference attendees broke into three groups, each faced with a different question:

- How is the Internet redefining the role of news media in the lives of young people?
- How is the Internet redefining the practice of citizenship among young people?
- How is the Internet redefining the concept of community building among young people?

What the participants of this conferences really should have been asking is, How do the ways young people engage with the Internet challenge existing notions of news media, citizenship and community building? Until we ask what young people have to teach us, we will continue to take a managed approach to new media – an approach that does little to challenge existing norms or inspire youth.

It is necessary to rethink the ways that we attempt to engage young people in civil society. Civic organizations must go further than providing information and educational institutions must go further than providing civic tools. Together these institutions must find a way to invest young people in civic issues and inspire them to action. Future studies must ask: How can we work to help young people find the inspiration they are looking for?

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Appendix A

Letter of Information

Dear Research Participant,

Thank you very much for your interest in this study. My name is Nora Draper and I am a Master's student in the Department of Journalism and Communications at Carleton University. I am the sole researcher in this study; however, the project is under the supervision of Dr. Eileen Saunders, a professor in the Department of Journalism and Communications at Carleton University.

This letter is in response to your expressed interest in the project outlined during your course. I am recruiting first and fourth year students at Carleton University for participation in a small study of the Internet habits and preferences of youth and the process of civic identity formation.

Your participation in the study will take place in two phases. The first is the completion of an online questionnaire and the second is participation in a focus group. The online questionnaire will be emailed to you three days prior to the focus group. You will have 48 hours to complete it on your own. The questionnaire should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The focus group will take place on the Carleton University campus. It will be audio recorded for the purposes of transcription. The focus group will discuss further the topics identified in the online questionnaire; however, the specific answers given on the questionnaire will not be discussed. The focus group will take approximately 1 to 1 ¼ hours.

As with any focus group, there is a risk of embarrassment or concern due to the social acceptance of answers given. However, the focus group facilitator will ensure that all participants and their responses are respected. Any failure to respect a fellow participant will result in removal from the study and the forfeiture of any compensation that has not already been collected.

The responses given in the online questionnaire will be anonymous and will not be attributed to you in any reports or presentations emanating from the study. Due to the nature of focus groups, the second phase of research will not be anonymous, that is, your identity will be known to the researcher and to fellow research participants. However, your answers will not be attributed to you in any reports or presentation in which the research is used.

Participation in this study may help you to explore your identity as a civic actor with political and social agency. You may be exposed to new online tools for networking, information gathering and distribution, and organizing. Participation in this study may also provide a networking opportunity for individuals looking to organize with others at Carleton University.

If at any point you decide, for any reason, that you no longer wish to participate in this study, you may withdraw. At this time, you may decide if I can use the information you provided to that point, or if you wish it to be removed from the study and destroyed. To have questionnaire data removed, you must be able to identify the PIN assigned to you at the start of the study. In the case of focus groups information, the audio recordings will be destroyed and your answers will not be recorded in the transcription of the data.

To thank you for your participation in the study, you will receive a \$15 gift certificate to the Carleton Campus Bookstore at the end of the focus group. In addition, food and beverages will be provided during the focus group.

The information collected through the online questionnaires and the focus groups will be kept either on a password-protected computer or in a locked security box accessible only by the researcher. The audio recording will be destroyed upon completion of the transcription of the data – no more than 7 days after the focus group. The questionnaire data and focus group transcripts will be kept for the duration of the study. It is possible that this data will be used in future research, presentations or reports; however, none of this data will be attributable to you.

Once the study is complete, copies will be made accessible to the public through the Carleton University Library and the Reader's Digest Resource Centre (Room 102, St. Patrick's Building). If you would like to be notified by the researcher when the results are available, you will be given the option of receiving that information via email.

This project has been reviewed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee and received ethics clearance. If you have any concerns about your involvement in this study, you may direct questions or comments to the ethics committee chair.

Professor Antonio Gualtieri, Chair
Carleton University Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services
Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6
Tel: 613-520-2517
E-mail: ethics@carleton.ca

Once again, thank you very much for your interest in this study. If you wish to participate, please send an email indicating that to ndraper@connect.carleton.ca. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Nora Draper
School of Journalism and Communication
ndraper@connect.carleton.ca

Dr. Eileen Saunders
School of Journalism and Communication
eileen_saunders@carleton.ca

Appendix B

Online Questionnaire (hard copy)

Page One: Thank you for being involved in the study. Please read the following consent form and indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following. (*Insert letter of consent with check box*)

Page Two: Please record the PIN given to you in the email you received.

Page Three: In this study, we will be looking at websites intended to help youth engage in civic society. That is, to help youth inform themselves and others and organize around social issues. Please visit the first website and take approximately 5 minutes navigating this page. Clicking on this link will open a separate window. Once you have finished navigating the page, please return to the survey. <http://issues.takingitglobal.org/hiv>

Page Four: The following questions require you to think about the *Taking IT Global: HIV / AIDS* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.
<http://issues.takingitglobal.org/hiv>

Information:

Many civic websites contain tools to allow youth to gather and disseminate information. Please indicate how helpful or unhelpful you found each of the following website features.

Feature	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	N/A
Newsletters	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
News Information / Articles	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Statistics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Guide to Action	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Books	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unhelpful and ten meaning very helpful, how would you rate the information found on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to use the information found on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Five:

The following questions require you to think about the *Taking IT Global: HIV / AIDS* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

<http://issues.takingitglobal.org/hiv>

Organization/Networking:

Many civic websites contain tools to help youth organize and network around issues. Please indicate how helpful or unhelpful you found each of the following website features.

Feature	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	N/A
List of events /projects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Organizational toolkits	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Make Connections Section	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unhelpful and ten meaning very helpful, how would you rate the organizational tools on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to use the organizational tools found on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Six:**Interactive Tools / Creative Expression**

The following questions require you to think about the *Taking IT Global: HIV / AIDS* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

<http://issues.takingitglobal.org/hiv>

Many civic websites contain interactive tools that allow youth to express themselves in creative ways. Please indicate how helpful or unhelpful you found each of the following website features.

Feature	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	N/A
Pictures (Global Gallery)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Multimedia	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Blogs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discussion Groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Petitions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Links to Other Sites	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unhelpful and ten meaning very helpful, how would you rate the interactive tools on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to use the interactive tools found on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Seven:

Popular Culture

The following questions require you to think about the *Taking IT Global: HIV / AIDS* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

<http://issues.takingitglobal.org/hiv>

Many civic websites contain references to popular culture. Please indicate how helpful or unhelpful you found the following website feature.

Feature	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	N/A
Notable Quotes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unhelpful and ten meaning very helpful, how helpful are the popular culture tool on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to read the endorsements of popular figures on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Eight: TakingITGlobal Overall

The following questions require you to think about the *Taking IT Global: HIV / AIDS* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

<http://issues.takingitglobal.org/hiv>

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, where one means not at all user friendly and ten meaning very user friendly, how user friendly did you find this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, where one means not at all interactive and ten means very interactive, how interactive did you find this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

When people discuss websites, they often talk about the aesthetic value of the website (e.g. website design, layout, colours, pictures, etc.) Overall, on a scale from one to ten, where one means not at all aesthetically pleasing and ten means very aesthetically pleasing, how aesthetically pleasing did you find this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Nine:

Please visit the second website and take approximately 5 minutes navigating this page. Clicking on this link will open a separate window.

http://projects.psi.org/site/PageServer?pagename=home_homepageindex

Page Ten:

The following questions require you to think about the *YouthAIDS* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

http://projects.psi.org/site/PageServer?pagename=home_homepageindex

Information:

Many civic websites contain tools to allow youth to gather and disseminate information. Please indicate how helpful or unhelpful you found each of the following website features.

Feature	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	N/A
Donation Information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E-newsletter	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Information on how to get involved	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Statistics and Facts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Testing Information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Media	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unhelpful and ten meaning very helpful, how would you rate the information found on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to use the information found on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Eleven:

Organization/Networking:

The following questions require you to think about the *YouthAIDS* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

http://projects.psi.org/site/PageServer?pagename=home_homepageindex

Many civic websites contain tools to help youth organize and network around issues. Please indicate how helpful or unhelpful you found each of the following website features.

Feature	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	N/A
Events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Event resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Join online community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unhelpful and ten meaning very helpful, how would you rate the organizational tools on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to use the organizational tools found on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Twelve:

Interactive Tools / Creative Expression

The following questions require you to think about the *YouthAIDS* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

http://projects.psi.org/site/PageServer?pagename=home_homepageindex

Many civic websites contain interactive tools that allow youth to express themselves in creative ways. Please indicate how helpful or unhelpful you found each of the following website features.

Feature	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	N/A
Links to external websites	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Submit your story	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Videos (YouTube)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quizzes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unhelpful and ten meaning very helpful, how would you rate the interactive tools on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to use the interactive tools found on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Thirteen: Popular Culture

The following questions require you to think about the *YouthAIDS* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

http://projects.psi.org/site/PageServer?pagename=home_homepageindex

Many civic websites contain references to popular culture. Please indicate how helpful or unhelpful you found the following website feature.

Feature	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	N/A
Celebrity ambassadors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to read the celebrity endorsements on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Fourteen: Consumer Engagement

The following questions require you to think about the *YouthAIDS* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

http://projects.psi.org/site/PageServer?pagename=home_homepageindex

Many civic websites contain opportunities for consumer engagement (e.g. boycotts, boycotts, cause-based merchandise, etc.) Please indicate how helpful or unhelpful you found the following website feature.

Feature	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	N/A
Order paraphernalia	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to order something from this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Fifteen: YouthAIDS Overall

The following questions require you to think about the *YouthAIDS* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

http://projects.psi.org/site/PageServer?pagename=home_homepageindex

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, where one means not at all user friendly and ten meaning very user friendly, how user friendly did you find this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, where one means not at all interactive and ten means very interactive, how interactive did you find this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, where one means not at all aesthetically pleasing and ten means very aesthetically pleasing, how aesthetically pleasing did you find this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Sixteen: Red Campaign

Please visit the third website and take approximately 5 minutes navigating this page.

Clicking on this link will open a separate window.

<http://www.joinred.com>

Page Seventeen:

The following questions require you to think about the *Red Campaign* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

<http://www.joinred.com>

Information:

Many civic websites contain tools to allow youth to gather and disseminate information. Please indicate how helpful or unhelpful you found each of the following website features.

Feature	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	N/A
Donation Information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Email notifications	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
News information / Media	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unhelpful and ten meaning very helpful, would you rate the information found on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to use the information found on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Eighteen:

The following questions require you to think about the *Red Campaign* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

<http://www.joinred.com>

Organization/Networking:

Many civic websites contain tools to help youth organize and network around issues.

Please indicate how helpful or unhelpful you found each of the following website feature.

Feature	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	N/A
Events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unhelpful and ten meaning very helpful, how would you rate the organizational tool on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to use the organizational tool found on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Nineteen:

The following questions require you to think about the *Red Campaign* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

<http://www.joinred.com>

Interactive Tools / Creative Expression

Many civic websites contain interactive tools that allow youth to express themselves in creative ways. Please indicate how helpful or unhelpful you found each of the following website features.

Feature	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	N/A
Links to external websites	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Send Links	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Audio / Video Material	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quizzes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Blog					

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unhelpful and ten meaning very helpful, how would you rate the interactive tools on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to use the interactive tools found on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Twenty:

The following questions require you to think about the *Red Campaign* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

<http://www.joinred.com>

Popular Culture

Many civic websites contain references to popular culture. Please indicate how helpful or unhelpful you found the following website feature.

Feature	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	N/A
Celebrity endorsement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to read the celebrity endorsements on this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Twenty-One:

The following questions require you to think about the *Red Campaign* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

<http://www.joinred.com>

Consumer Engagement

Many civic websites contain opportunities for consumer engagement (e.g. boycotts, boycotts, cause-based merchandise, etc.) Please indicate how helpful or unhelpful you found the following website feature.

Feature	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	N/A
Order paraphernalia	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, one meaning very unlikely and ten meaning very likely, how likely would you be to order something from this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Twenty-Two:

The following questions require you to think about the *Red Campaign* website you just visited. Please feel free to return to the website while answering these questions.

<http://www.joinred.com>

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, where one means not at all user friendly and ten meaning very user friendly, how user friendly did you find this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, where one means not at all interactive and ten means very interactive, how interactive did you find this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, on a scale from one to ten, where one means not at all aesthetically pleasing and ten means very aesthetically pleasing, how aesthetically pleasing did you find this website?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Twenty-Three: Website Features

Considering all of the website features we have outlined in this questionnaire, please rank them in order of importance to a civic website where one is most important.

- ☐ Consumer Engagement
- ☐ Aesthetics
- ☐ Popular Culture
- ☐ Interactive Tools / Creative Expression
- ☐ Organization / Networking Tools
- ☐ Information

Page Twenty-Four: Demographic Information

Please indicate your current year in university

1	2	3	4
☐	☐	☐	☐

Please indicate your current program

Mass Communication	☐
Public Affairs and Policy Management	☐
Other	☐

Page Twenty-Five: Engagement

Please indicate if you voted in any of the following:

	Yes	No	Not Eligible	Prefer not to answer
The most recent federal election	☐	☐	☐	☐
The most recent provincial election	☐	☐	☐	☐
The most recent municipal election	☐	☐	☐	☐
The most recent Carleton University Student Association (CUSA) election	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please indicate if you belong to any of the following civic organizations:

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Prefer not to answer	If yes, which one(s):
Political Party	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Non-Governmental Organization or Charitable	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Student organizations	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Page Twenty-Six: Media Consumption

Please indicate from which, if any, of the following news sources you get your news (select as many as necessary).

- ☐ Traditional Print Media (Magazine / Newspapers)

- ☐ Television
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ Alternative Print Media (Magazines / Newspapers)
- ☐ Online Traditional Newspapers / Magazines
- ☐ Online Alternative Newspapers / Magazines
- ☐ Other: _____

Page Twenty-Seven: Thank You.

Thank you very much for your participation in this study. Please remember that you are asked to attend your focus group. Consult your email for the time and location. If you have any questions, please contact the researcher at ndraper@connect.carleton

Appendix C

Focus Group Guide

Room is set up with a table, chairs and three-four computers, one of which is hooked up to an LCD projector and projected onto the wall. Research participants are asked to sit at the table and fill out a name card.

Part 1: Introduction (7-10 minutes max.)

a. Facilitator Introduction (5-7 minutes max.)

Welcome and thank you for taking time to participate in this study. My name is Nora and I will be facilitating the discussion today. We will be looking at the same websites that you we introduced to during the online questionnaire portion of the study. At this time, I'll ask you to read the Letter of Consent in front of you and sign both copies. One is for you and one is to be left with me. [Facilitator collects signed consent forms].

I just want to highlight some of the information in the letter. Our conversation will be audio recorded for transcription purposes. Your names will not be included in the written transcription. We will be discussing your opinions about different topics today. I want to remind everyone that I am interested in any and all opinions that you may have. I expect all participants and opinions will be respected. Failure to show this respect will result in removal from the study.

Please feel free to help yourself to food and drink at any time during the focus group. I just ask that you not eat or drink around the computers.

b. Participant Introduction (2-3 minutes max.)

Let's start by introducing ourselves with our name and program.
[Participants introduce themselves].

Part 2: Citizenship (15 minutes max.)

I would like to begin with a discussion about citizenship.

- a. Take a few seconds and write down the first three things that come to mind when I ask what is necessary to be a "good citizen"? (1 minute max.)
- b. *Ask participants to throw out some of their responses and make a brainstorming list on the screen/wall. (4 minutes max.)*
- c. Let's discuss some of the things on this list and see if we can isolate the features of a "good citizen." (10 minutes max.)
Probe: Are we talking about behavior, action, inaction, knowledge, etc?
- d. How important is it to you to be a good citizen – however you define it?"

Part 3: Civic Competencies (15 minutes max.)

When we look at this list of what it means to be a good citizen, there are certain skills or tools that are necessary to enact our citizenship.

What are some of these skills and/or tools that are necessary for us to fulfill our role as good citizens?

Phrase differently: How do we learn how to become citizens?

Probe: Are we talking about: knowledge/information/education, skills, access, networks, etc?

Part 4: New Media (25 minutes max.)

Now, let's look at the role that new media plays in this discussion.

- a. Take some time to reacquaint yourselves with the websites from the online questionnaire. (10 minutes max.)
- b. First off, what are your reactions to these websites? On the paper in front of you, rank the sites from one to three. (5 minutes max.)
How many people said that Taking IT Global was their favourite site? Why?
The Red Campaign? Why?
Youth AIDS? Why?
- c. Do these websites give us the tools/knowledge/access/skills we need to be good citizens? (10 minutes max.)

Part 5: Call-to-Action (15 minutes max.)

Each of these websites has a call-to-action or a goal that it wants to achieve.

- a. What is the call-to-action for each site? (5 minutes max.)
Phrased differently: What is each site trying to persuade you to do?
Let's start with the Red Campaign site.
The Youth AIDS site
The Taking IT Global site
- b. Is this an attractive call-to-action? Why or why not? (5 minutes max.)
- c. Does the website provide you with the necessary tools for its call-to-action? (5 minutes max.)

Part 6: Final Thoughts (5 minutes max.)

Are there any additional comments on anything we've discussed?

Part 7: Exit Question (approx. 1 minute)

On this sheet of paper, please indicate which website feature are the most important to you. Rank them from one to six (where one is the most important).

Thank You! (1 minute)

I'd like to thank you very much for your participation in this study. Your answers have been interesting and helpful. Please make sure that you take a copy of your Letter of Consent and pick up your gift card on the way out.

Appendix D

Taking IT Global (TIG) Webpage Shots

TakingITGlobal
 Inspire Inform Involve

[English](#)
[go](#)
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[Sign Up](#)

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[For Educators](#)

[Site Map](#)
[What's Hot?](#)

[Make Connections](#)
[Take Action](#)
[Browse Resources](#)
[Express Yourself](#)
[Understand Issues](#)
[Explore the World](#)

[Home](#)
[Home](#)
[Understanding Issues](#)
[Health & Wellness](#)
[HIV/AIDS](#)

HIV/AIDS
 Health & Wellness

Inform yourself on important global issues.

Art & Media

Peace, Conflict & Governance

Health & Wellness

Art & Media

Diet & Nutrition

Disasters

Finance & Sport

HIV/AIDS

Maternal Health & Child Mortality

Sexuality

Substance Abuse

Traditional and Conventional Medicine

Environment & Urbanization

Human Rights & Equity

Technology & Innovation

Learning & Education

Work & Economics

Culture & Identity

Notable Quotes

We must spend our energy on fighting this epidemic, not fighting each other.

- Peter Piot, Executive Director
UNAIDS

"When the history of our times is written, will we be remembered as the generation that turned our backs in a moment of a global crisis or will it be recorded that we did the right thing?" - Nelson Mandela

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. This virus is transferred from person to person when an HIV positive individual's blood, semen, vaginal fluids, or breast milk comes in contact with another person's bloodstream (through the mouth, throat, or breaks in the skin). This viral infection usually occurs during unprotected sexual activity, but can also occur between an HIV/AIDS positive mother and her child, through an unsafe blood transfusion, and by sharing used needles.

Once infected it takes as long as 8 to 10 years for the Human... (more)

[Printer Friendly Version](#)

Resources On TIG

Events

Toolkits

Books

Panorama

Global Gallery

Blogs

Projects

Groups

Petitions

Resources On The Web

Statistics

Web Links

Articles

News

Multimedia

Our Partners

Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GYCA)

The Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GYCA) empowers young leaders in HIV/AIDS with the knowledge, skills, resources and opportunities they need to be successful agents of change in their...

Guide to Action

Download PDF
 4 MB

Download (PDF: 4 MB)

TakingITGlobal TV

Suggestions? Let us know!

Interested Members

TAKINGITGLOBAL HIV/AIDS YOUTH GUIDE TO ACTION

An Interactive Guide To Realizing Your Goals and Making A Difference

Created by: **TakingITGlobal**
Building Evidence. Changing Behavior.

04

05

HIV/AIDS YOUTH GUIDE TO ACTION

An Interactive Guide To Realizing Your Goals and Making A Difference

Process Overview

- 1 GET INSPIRED**
 - Find Your Inspiration
 - Positive Responses
- 2 GET INFORMED**
 - Check Your HIV/AIDS Knowledge
 - Expand Your Understanding of HIV/AIDS Statistics
 - HIV/AIDS Around the World
 - HIV/AIDS in Canada
 - HIV/AIDS in Your Community
- 3 GET FOCUSED**
 - Identify Your Passions
 - Lead Your Project to Success
 - Leverage a Team
- 4 GET CONNECTED**
 - The Importance of Networking
 - Identify Your Networks
 - Track Your Contacts
 - Know Your Resources
- 5 GET MOVING**
 - Set Goals
 - Choose a Project Idea
 - Create Your Action Plan
 - Break It Down
 - Implement Your Action Plan
- 6 HAVE A LASTING IMPACT**
 - Evaluate Your Progress Along the Way
 - Sustain Your Action to Make Its Mark Last Longer

Guide available at: <http://hivaidsguide.takingitglobal.org>

INTRODUCTION

How to Use this Guide

GET INSPIRED

Find your Inspiration

Positive Responses

GET INFORMED

Check Your HIV/AIDS Knowledge

Expand your Understanding of HIV/AIDS Statistics

HIV/AIDS Around the World

HIV/AIDS in Canada

HIV/AIDS in Your Community

GET FOCUSED

Identify Your Passions

Lead Your Project to Success

Leverage a Team

GET CONNECTED

The Importance of Networking

Identify Your Networks

Track Your Contacts

Know Your Resources

GET MOVING

Set Goals

Choose a Project Idea

Create Your Action Plan

Break It Down

Implement Your Action Plan

HAVE A LASTING IMPACT

Evaluate Your Progress Along the Way

Sustain Your Action to Make Its Mark Last Longer

APPENDICES

A: THE INSPIRATION SECTION

i) Signs of Hope

ii) Selections from Hayden Hornar's Journal

iii) Interview with Ivy Vu, Canadian Youth Advocate

iv) Project Ideas

B: THE RESOURCES SECTION

i) Fast Facts about HIV/AIDS

ii) Young People and HIV/AIDS (provided by the Toronto YouthForce)

iii) Myth vs. Fact Sheet

iv) HIV/AIDS in Canada

v) HIV/AIDS Around the World

vi) Glossary

Appendix E

YouthAIDS Webpage Shots

*It's about
changing the world.*

REGISTER

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[OUR WORK](#)
[OUR PARTNERS](#)
[OUR AMBASSADORS](#)
[EVENTS](#)
[MEDIA](#)

FEATURED EVENTS + PROJECTS

**INSPIRE
CHANGE
FOR \$5**

WITH THE ALDO FIGHT'S AIDS CUFFS

LEARN MORE →

ALL NET PROCEEDS BENEFIT YOUTH AIDS

DARK WAS THE NIGHT A RED HOT COMPILATION

Featuring new exclusive tracks by over 30 artists

CLOTHES OFF OUR BACK

Prevention is Power

YouthAIDS Annual Gala: The Power of Music

Clothes Off Our Back
From Jan. 11 through March 11, 2009, fashionable women everywhere can bid on little black dresses from Emmy Rossum, Jamie Lynn Sigler, Jennifer Esposito, Michelle Trachtenberg, Samantha Harris, Jennifer Morrison and Keisha Whitaker and proceeds will benefit YouthAIDS. [Bid here >](#)

Prevention is Power
YouthAIDS celebrity supporters encourage you to embrace your power. [Watch the PSA >](#)

YouthAIDS Annual Gala: The Power of Music
YouthAIDS celebrated the enormous influence of music in driving social change at our Annual Gala on October 3rd. [Read more >](#)

DONATE NOW >>

Join us now and help support our work.
Make a donation now on our site or via:

GOOD 6 ISSUES, 20 BUCKS
100% Goes to YouthAIDS

GET CONNECTED
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SUPPORTERS

[Charityfolks.com](#)

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AMBASSADORS

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EVENTS

MEDIA

[Ashley Judd, Global Ambassador](#) | [YouthAIDS Ambassadors](#) | [Ambassador Trips](#)

GET CONNECTED

Want to keep up to date?
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free e-newsletter

DONATE NOW

Join us now and help support
our work. Every donation
helps!

Make a donation now!

STATISTICS

- Every day, over 6800 people contract HIV and over 5700 die from AIDS.
- 33.2 million people are living with HIV.
- AIDS kills one child every minute

ASHLEY JUDD, GLOBAL AMBASSADOR

Ashley Judd
YouthAIDS Global Ambassador

Ashley Judd joined YouthAIDS as Global Ambassador in 2002 after seeing the effects of HIV/AIDS on communities and children in the United States and around the globe. With no cure in sight, and the realization that education is the only way to prevent the spread of this disease, Ashley uses her celebrity status to speak on behalf of those without a voice and to promote YouthAIDS' programs to provide young adults with immediate solutions for fighting AIDS.

Speaking out in Hollywood and around the world, Ashley's tireless efforts raise awareness and much needed funding for YouthAIDS prevention and education programs.

Since joining YouthAIDS as Global Ambassador, Ashley has traveled to Thailand, Cambodia, Kenya, Madagascar and South Africa visiting clinics and schools, and speaking to youth one-on-one about HIV. In 2006, Ashley visited Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua with Salma Hayek and our new Ambassador for Latin America, Juanes once again visiting YouthAIDS programs firsthand. In 2007, Ashley was joined by Seane Corn, Sushmita Sen, Akshay Kumar and Shahrukh Khan on a journey through India to explore why young women are at great risk for HIV infection. Most recently, Ashley went to Rwanda and the Democratic of the Republic of Congo where she visited programs like the youth-friendly Centre Dushishoze youth centers which combine skill training and reproductive health information and services.

Take a look at Ashley's journeys to YouthAIDS programs

Watch Ashley tell an Untold Story about HIV/AIDS on MTV's MySpace page

YOU: Always organizing your friends to do something big at your school
US: Saving lives around the world

The perfect relationship!

to be a

and help us save lives

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It's about
changing the world.

REGISTER

GET TESTED

- TESTING FAQ
- WHERE TO GET TESTED

GET EDUCATED

- STATISTICS
- GET THE FACTS
- TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE
- HIV/AIDS RESOURCES

ABOUT US

OUR WORK

OUR PARTNERS

OUR AMBASSADORS

EVENTS

MEDIA

GET CONNECTED

Want to keep up to date?
Click to sign up for our
free e-newsletter

DONATE NOW

Join us now and help support
our work. Every donation
helps!
Make a donation now!

STATISTICS

- Every day, over 6800 people contract HIV and over 5700 die from AIDS.
- 33.2 million people are living with HIV.
- AIDS kills one child every minute.

STATISTICS

Global

- 33.2 million people now live with HIV or AIDS.
- In 2007, approximately 2.5 million people were infected with HIV.
- Every day, over 6800 people become infected with HIV - almost five people per minute.
- 5700 people die from AIDS every day.
- One child dies every minute.
- 15 million children around the world have been orphaned by AIDS, losing one or both parents to the disease.
- Every fifteen seconds, another person age 15-24 becomes infected with HIV/AIDS.

US

- Roughly one million people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States.
- Since the start of the AIDS epidemic, 1.5 million Americans have been infected with HIV and more than 524,000 have died of AIDS.
- At least 40,000 people are infected each year.
- African Americans account for 48% of new HIV infections.
- AIDS is the leading cause of death for African American women aged 25 to 34 and HIV rates among Hispanic women are increasing.
- The number of women living with HIV has tripled in the last two decades.
- At least half of all new infections are among people under the age of 25.
- Washington, DC has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in the United States - one in 20 people are living with HIV or AIDS.

What can you do? Get the Facts, Get Tested, Get Involved.

YOU: Always organizing your friends to do something big at your school.
US: Saving lives around the world.

The perfect relationship!
to be a and help us save lives

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Register
Create a username and password to be connected to us and other ambassadors.
Register Now!

Set Up your Site
Build your own page and blog about why you care about the HIV/AIDS issue.
Go to your site!

Run Your Events
Host an event or become the team captain of a group to support YouthAIDS.
Click here for event ideas!

Tell Your Story
Get creative! Share your story about a great event or your connection to the issue.
Submit a story now!

YouthAIDS Walk-a-thon fundraiser
Watch funny video of students from Missouri!

Buying Condoms...that was easy
Watch one of our creative PSAs from the Caribbean.

I love you, I protect you
A fun PSA from China about HIV prevention. Watch now!

If you don't register, you can't VOTE!

ROCK!VOTE
www.rockthevote.com

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*It's about
changing the world.*

REGISTER

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- GET THE FACTS
- TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE
- HIV/AIDS RESOURCES

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OUR PARTNERS

OUR AMBASSADORS

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Want to keep up to date?
Click to sign up for our
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DONATE NOW

Join us now and help support
our work. Every donation
helps!

[Make a donation now!](#)

STATISTICS

- Every day, over 6800 people
contract HIV and over 5700
die from AIDS.
- 33.2 million people are living
with HIV.
- AIDS kills one child every
minute

SHOP FOR A CAUSE

By purchasing any of the following products benefiting YouthAIDS, you are directly supporting the fight against HIV/AIDS.

ALDO Fights AIDS "Love Your Life" Cuffs

By purchasing the limited edition ALDO Fights AIDS "Love Your Life" cuffs for just \$5 you are making a huge difference. 100% of the net proceeds from your purchase will benefit YouthAIDS. [Click here to browse the cuffs.](#)

The Perfect Tee Made Even Better!

Anthropologie and Velvet have teamed up to support YouthAIDS' life-saving work through the sale of the Lime Blossom Tee. All proceeds from the sale of this Velvet tee, on-line or in Anthropologie stores, will be donated to YouthAIDS. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Fashion Against AIDS

H&M and Designers Against AIDS launched the "Fashion Against AIDS" collection with well known musicians and artists such as Rihanna, Good Charlotte, Jade Jagger, My Chemical Romance, Rufus Wainwright, Scissor Sisters, The Cardigans, Tika, Timbaland and Ziggy Marley on January 31st.

All garments were made from 100 per cent certified organic cotton and carried a special hang tag that reads: "This might be the most important piece of clothing you've ever had your hands on." The collection "Fashion Against AIDS" was available at H&M stores globally beginning January 31st for a limited time. 25 per cent of the proceeds from the collection benefited DAA and YouthAIDS.

Roberto Coin

Jewelry designer Roberto Coin is donating five percent of net proceeds to YouthAIDS for all jewelry pieces featured in this fall's advertising campaign featuring Christy Turlington. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Appendix F

(PRODUCT)^{RED} Webpage Shots¹

the (PRODUCT)RED campaign supports:

- join (PRODUCT)RED
- friends
- contact
- FAQs
- media room
- privacy
- terms of use

(PRODUCT)RED IDEA

we words on how (PRODUCT)RED works and why (PRODUCT)RED is working.
[here to read the entire \(PRODUCT\)RED IDEA >](#)

(PRODUCT)^{RED}

There are hundreds of ways to support the elimination of AIDS in Africa

[shop \(PRODUCT\)RED >](#)

¹ The (PRODUCT)RED website uses Flash, an application that allows graphics to appear and disappear from the screen. Page shots were unable to capture these changing graphics, causing an excess of white space in the shots that does not appear when looking at the screen.

THE (RED) CAMPAIGN

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HIV/AIDS IN AFRICA
HOW (RED) WORKS
PARTNERS
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SHOP
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ABOUT (RED) •

“WE MUST ALL COME TOGETHER IN SUPPORTING
THE GLOBAL FUND AND THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS.
WE MUST ALL COME TOGETHER IN SUPPORTING
THEIR VISION AND COMMITMENT.”

—Nelson Mandela, 1997, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008

learn more about HIV/AIDS IN AFRICA •

PARTNERS

THE (RED) CAMPAIGN

THE AMOUNT OF FUNDS GENERATED BY (RED) TO DATE IS THE EQUIVALENT OF PROVIDING MORE THAN 669,000 PEOPLE WITH HIV WITH LIFE-SAVING ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY FOR A YEAR.

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THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER BRANDS HAVE BECOME (RED)

brands that DO THE (RED) THING

IN YEAR 2 (RED) HAS RAISED OVER \$100 MILLION FOR AIDS PREVENTION AND CARE

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PARTICIPATE

YOU ARE NOW EMPOWE(RED)!

SHOW YOUR BELIEF IN THE (RED) IDEA

GET INVOLVED AND TAKE ACTION YOURSELF.
 AND PASS YOUR SUPPORT ALONG TO OTHERS
 IN YOUR SOCIAL SPHERE.

Here's your chance. Boldly show off what you believe in with (RED) by your side.

Social Network

Be our friend. Please. Find out where we are out there on the net, then add us to your social network.

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YOUR (RED) PURCHASES HAVE HELPED PROVIDE LIFESAVING ANTIRETROVIRAL TREATMENT FOR NEARLY 80,000 PEOPLE IN RWANDA, SWAZILAND, CAMBODIA AND LESOTHO

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