

## **When New Media Meet the Strong Web of Connected Learning Environments: A New Vision of Progressive Education in the Digital Age**

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### **Abstract**

This paper shows how the legacy of Jane Addams' socialized education can live on in today's progressive education, especially in the digital age. Discussion is drawn from a case study of an anti-underage drinking campaign conducted by urban youth of color in an afterschool program. The media ecology environment in the campaign—the integrated usage of new and traditional media—enriched the way the youth made sense of experience and communicated with the world. The campaign led youth to learn more about other important issues, culture, and community history. Another critical element of the campaign's success was the active participatory culture of local community organizations and businesses, which formed an extensive support network for the youth's engagement. This case suggests that the synergistic relationship between new media ecology and connected learning environments can make progressive education more promising in the digital age.

**Keywords:** socialized education, connected learning, transformative learning, new media, media ecology,

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## Introduction

In 1889, Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr built Hull House on the west side of Chicago in order to help community residents, mostly new immigrants from European countries, acclimate to their new social environment. Over the decades, Hull House residents provided services to meet the needs of the community residents and also conducted many grassroots projects to improve the living conditions of the community. They investigated pressing issues in the community, including sanitation, sweatshops, child labor, infant mortality, tuberculosis, cocaine distribution, and more, which afterwards led to the amendment of related laws in Chicago and the nation. Hull House also opened the first public playground in Chicago, the first kindergarten, the first college extension class, and a labor museum.

Although her work on social innovation influenced John Dewey's ideas on education (and vice versa), Addams' philosophy on education has received little attention. Like John Dewey, Addams (1910/1999) highlighted the significance of connected learning in ordinary life experiences, where children naturally learn and practice democratic social values. Her view of education, which she called "socialized education" (a term which also serves as the title of the last chapter of her book, *Twenty Years at Hull House*), is based on these communal efforts integrated with social investigation and action for the sake of social improvement. I identify two features—connected learning in ordinary lives and transformative action for social change—as key elements in Addams' socialized education. I then discuss how the legacy of Jane Addams' socialized education can live on in today's progressive education, especially in the digital age.

## Hull House, Socialized Education, and New Media

**Connected inquiry in ordinary lives.** Addams observed that public schools did not connect students' everyday experiences to their learning. She criticized public schools for assuming that "the ordinary experience of life is worth little and that all knowledge and interest must be brought to the children through the medium of books" (1902/2002, p. 81). In such an environment far detached from students' ordinary lives, students from recently immigrated families were prone to becoming uninterested in learning and disenfranchised in schools.

Addams suggested the Hull House educational activities as an alternative to such a limited view of education. She noted, "It is needless to say that a Settlement is a protest against a restricted view of education" (1910/1999, p. 253). People at Hull House learned from each other's different cultural heritages, skills, and knowledge, as well as collaborating on the examination of important issues of the community. Their learning was not limited to a certain location (e.g., classroom) or content (e.g., textbook/curriculum) but took place in the whole community surrounding an array of local issues.

Among many examples that represent connected learning in Hull House was the Labor Museum. Addams purposely chose the word "museum" in preference to "school," remarking "The latter [school] is distasteful to grown-up people from its association with childish tasks, and ... the former [museum] still retains some of the fascinations of the show" (Addams, 1900, p. 3). The Labor Museum valued ordinary people's experiences and resources. For example, various methods of spinning from Syria to Norway were collected from the neighborhood itself. In the Labor Museum, people taught their cultural heritage to others: not only spinning skills, but also cooking and languages, in a reciprocal relationship. This kind of connected learning space largely influenced her vision of a learning center for the neighborhood. She briefly illustrates that vision below:

A glimpse of the Hull House shops on a busy evening incites the imagination as to what the ideal public school might offer during the long winter nights, if it becomes really a “center” for the neighborhood. We could imagine the business man teaching the immigrant his much needed English and arithmetic and receiving in return lessons in the handling of tools and materials so that they should assume in his mind a totally different significance from that the factory gives them (1904/2002, p. 120).

This vision became the foundation of Addams’s thoughts on how education is connected with life in the community:

If we admit that in education it is necessary to begin with the experiences which the child already has and to use his spontaneous and social activity, then the city streets begin this education for him in a more natural way than does the school (1902/2002, p. 83).

Although her critiques of school-centered education cannot be applied directly to today’s school education, they still have implications for what education in a democratic society ought to be about. Democratic education encourages a critical view of the world and an active engagement in promoting public good and standing against social injustice. Diverse perspectives and ordinary experiences must be respected in democratic educational practices, so that everyone in the society is able to freely participate in knowledge production without any fear of judgment or prejudice.

**Transformative action.** The ultimate purpose of socialized education expressed at Hull House was social transformation. Profoundly concerned with the social injustice resulting from laissez-faire capitalism, Addams declared, “The educational activities of a Settlement, as well its philanthropic, civic, and social undertakings, are but differing manifestations of the attempt to socialize democracy, as is the very existence of the Settlement itself” (1910/2002, p. 85). Indeed, the investigation of issues including child labor, public health, sanitation, and more manifested grassroots inquiry and action for social change. Her emphasis on the collective effort to improve social equity constituted the foundation of her thoughts of social ethics in a democratic society, as stated in *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902/2002):

We are learning that a standard of social ethics is not attained by travelling a sequestered byway, but by mixing on the thronged and common road where all must turn out for one another, and at least see the size of one another’s burdens (p. 7).

She also undergirded the democratic spirit with a practice of social morality among people who owned different experiences and dispositions. She said:

To follow the path of social morality results perforce in the temper if not the practice of the democratic spirit, for it implies that diversified human experience and resultant sympathy which are the foundation and guarantee of Democracy” (p. 7).

The democratic principle of respect for differences and diversities is implanted in her educational ideals for democracy as well: “The democratic ideal demands of the school that it shall give the child’s own experience a social value; that it shall teach him to direct his own activities and adjust them to those of other people” (1902/2002, p. 81). In her era, granting the social value of students’ own experiences was a revolutionary argument for education, given the role of the public school system emphasizing the efficient production of industrial workers concentrating solely on reading and writing from textbooks.

Against the restricted view of education, the Hull House projects embodied such a radical educational perspective embedded in the social ethic of equity through the amalgamation of service, research, and social activism (Daynes & Longo, 2004).

It is worth noting that the two main features of socialized education—connected and transformative inquiry and action—work together inseparably to generate a dynamic democratic society. Even a hundred years later, many forms of social injustice are still mirrored in the school system, and a lot of youth experiences are undervalued or overlooked in many educational settings, because of their race, ethnicity, economic status, gender, and other factors. Seeing that Addams' critique still holds true, I focus on her thoughts on socialized education for re-envisioning progressive education today. The issue is then, "How would this "old" idea be revived today, particularly in the digital era?"

**New media and youth.** A variety of new media tools, including digital technologies and social media, are integral to the way youth express their thoughts, communicate with others, and understand the world. These tools are changing the nature of learning environments, not only broadening the scope of learning experiences but also encouraging youth to be creative and to take some initiative in their own education. Learning now takes place anywhere and at any time; the traditional divide between formal and informal contexts of learning is breaking down.

New participatory culture triggered by new media (Jenkins, 2010; Kahn & Middaugh, 2012) deserves attention. New media tools expand the opportunities of social expression, especially among historically marginalized youth. They create their own music and art, and challenge the expectations and prejudices imposed on youth of color (Akorn, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2006; Goodman, 2003; Haddix & Sealey-Ruiz, 2012; Norman, 2009). Youth media production is often incorporated with other forms of civic engagement such as youth organizing (or youth-led organizing) and youth participatory action research. This media activism by and large offers youth participants significant educational experiences in the digital age, in the form of experiential, production-oriented, interest-driven, and critical learning opportunities. It has been repeatedly reported that those in media activism have helped youth develop critical consciousness of social issues, improve their problem-solving and technology skills, gain social skills and responsibility, and more (Bruce & Lin, 2009; Chavez & Soep, 2005; Goodman, 2003; Hamilton & Flanagan, 2007).

In what follows, I discuss how Addams' spirit of education has been revived in youth community engagement in the digital age. The guiding questions are: Would the essence of Jane Addams' connected and transformative education remain the same? Or would new media create a fundamental difference between past and present socialized education? To answer these questions, I studied a youth-led anti-underage drinking initiative conducted by urban youth of color in an afterschool program called the Institute of Culture, Leadership, Arts, and Communication (ICLAC).

## **Methodology**

This study is part of my research on community activism, youth engagement and citizenship education (Nam, 2012).<sup>1</sup> The Institute of Culture, Leadership, Arts, and Communication (ICLAC) was a high school after-school program in an urban community in Chicago called Huntington Park. The youth participants were between 15 and 18 years old. Data come from observations and interviews that took place between March 2010 and June 2010, as well as reflections written by youth. Other data sources included the media products

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<sup>1</sup> The original research was partially introduced in my article that previously appeared in this journal, volume 8, number 3, "Implications of community activism among urban minority youth for education for engaged and critical citizenship."

youth created for the campaign (photographs, public service announcements, books the youth published using an online publishing tool), *La Opinión* (a local newspaper), web resources such as ICLAC's Facebook page, and more. The data were analyzed according to the three major issues introduced earlier: connected learning, transformative learning, and new media usage.

### **Youth-Led Anti-Underage Drinking Campaign in ICLAC**

Huntington Park has been known as a Puerto Rican community for decades, and it has a long history of community activism. Facing many urban issues and social prejudices imposed on urban communities of color, the community has made many efforts to meet the various needs of the community in terms of education, family support, local business, child care, housing, local media, and so on, under the leadership of the Puerto Rican Community Center (PRCC). The quote "Live and help to live," which highlights collectivism for mutual support, was the foundation of their social entrepreneurship to achieve long-term community development and grassroots democracy in the Huntington Park neighborhoods. Additionally, advocating for the Puerto Rican nationalist movement, a self-supported effort of the PRCC for community change, represented a strong symbol of resistance to U.S. colonialism and the actualization of the spirit of Puerto Rican independence in the community.

ICLAC, a high school afterschool program affiliated with the PRCC, also originated from the community's tradition of self-support. A youth organizing group, called *Barrio* (also sponsored by the PRCC),<sup>2</sup> saw the need for educational resources for local Puerto Rican and Latina/os outside of school, and began an afterschool program, now called ICLAC, with support of the PRCC. ICLAC provided local youth with an opportunity to acquire new media skills and learn about the community. Below is the introductory message listed on the ICLAC's Facebook page.

Utilizing a range of media, this innovative program encourages participants to **transform their community** and share their skills and knowledge across generations. Community youth become **the creators of media, rather than passively allowing media to shape their identities**. . . . All students also participate in a class called Participatory Democracy, which is the **civic engagement** component of the program where youth are trained as community organizers (emphasis mine).

As shown above, ICLAC put an emphasis on transformative education, creative and critical media production, and civic engagement. The anti-underage drinking campaign was one of the core activities in ICLAC. In addition to Participatory Democracy (PD) class on Monday, ICLAC offered four different media classes from Tuesday through Thursday: radio, print journalism, multimedia (a combination of photography and graphic design), and theater. These classes were built around the anti-underage drinking campaign; the four media classes created media products in multiple formats for the campaign for the sake of a broader reach both within and outside the community. Moreover, in a close connection with a youth organizing group called *Barrio*, ICLAC often organized cultural events in their space on Fridays, where the youth performed poetry, spoken-word, hip-hop music, dance, and singing.

**Youth friendly and positive messages.** The most prominent facet of ICLAC's anti-underage drinking campaign was a youth-friendly and positive approach. The ICLAC youth refused to adopt conventional and banal slogans containing negative words, such as "Do not drink" or "Stop drinking." The youth were aware that they had to fashion something different and unique enough to catch the attention of their peers who might have responded, "If we don't drink, what do we do instead?" The ICLAC youth created two major slogans: "This is

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<sup>2</sup> More information on the influence of *Barrio* on youth activism in the community is available in the same article mentioned in footnote 1.

the real me” and “Teach me how to live responsibly,” which targeted two different audiences. (These slogans were originally created by the youth who had participated in ICLAC the previous year, but they continued to be used in the following years.) Focusing on peers, “This is the real me” was aimed at delivering assorted messages and images of positive youth who engage in productive alternatives to drinking. Focusing on adults, “Teach me how to live responsibly” signaled that the youth needed the support of adults in order to live responsibly. It implied, importantly, that the anti-underage drinking campaign asked for the participation not only of peers, but also of the whole community.

**Media products in media ecology.** The ICLAC youth in the four media classes (radio, print journalism, multimedia, and theater) created diverse media products that represented the two slogans in different ways. The media classes were taught by the instructors who had cultural backgrounds similar to the youth in their classes, so that the youth could more easily connect culturally with their instructors..

**Radio class.** Among the major products of the radio class were public service announcements (PSAs). In order to gather stories about underage drinking, the youth went out to the community and interviewed people, both youth and adults. They asked community members what they thought about underage drinking, if they had any personal stories to share, if they disapproved of underage drinking and if so, why, and what positive alternatives existed. After coming back to the ICLAC studio, the youth edited their interviews, wrote a script, and recorded the PSAs using the audio editing programs Pro Tools and Garage Band. They created their own beats and sounds for the background music, which served both as a fun exercise and a way to avoid copyright infringement. Likewise, when they needed bike sound effects for their PSA, they simply went out to the street, had a friend ride a bike, and recorded the sound. Street sounds or salsa music that played in a local café were blended into the PSAs, too. These kinds of sounds from ordinary moments in the community helped make the PSAs culturally relevant to those who were living in the Huntington Park area. Upon completion, the youth uploaded these PSAs to the ICLAC website (<http://prcc-chgo.org>) and their Facebook page, as well as to a citywide public radio station in order to reach a broader audience.

**Multimedia class.** The multimedia class took the lead on the visual image production in the campaign. They created many different types of posters and flyers. (Although “multimedia” normally encompasses media and content beyond still images, in ICLAC the “multimedia” class focused on still image production.) The youth produced various images to represent drinking alternatives and positive adult-youth relationships to illustrate the two main slogans. For instance, to represent positive alternatives for “This is the real me,” the youth used photos of their peers engaging in a variety of activities such as bike riding, singing, writing, campaigning, working, and more. To characterize the slogan “Teach me how to live responsibly,” the youth took photos of an adult teaching haircutting skills to youth in a local barbershop, and an adult teaching youth to play drums in a high school (See Figure 1). Using a graphics editing program such as InDesign, the youth transformed these photos into more dynamic and intriguing images. The youth in the multimedia class also played a leading role in publishing the ICLAC book, using online publishing tools such as Blurb. The book, which included reflections, stories, poetry, and many photos of their campaign and community, allowed them to show people who they really were and how they engaged in the community.

Figure 1

A poster image created by the youth.



**Print journalism class.** The youth in the print journalism class conducted interviews with their peers about underage drinking and wrote newspaper articles for *La Opinión*, a local newspaper sponsored by the PRCC. *La Opinión* delivered news about housing, business, education, politics, and cultural events to the community residents, as well as news about Puerto Rico, which was not covered by the mainstream media that chiefly reported on the negative issues of the community. While standing up against the biased mainstream media, *La Opinión* usually reserved a section for the ICLAC youth. Luis, a coordinator of ICLAC and the editor of *La Opinión*, actively encouraged contributions from ICLAC youth to *La Opinión*, so that youth voices could be heard in the community.

**Theater class.** The theater class produced a play. The youth took part in writing a script with instructors by sharing their experiences and friends' stories about underage drinking. They spent a great deal of the time discussing what messages they would want to deliver to the audience and how to create realistic characters that both peers and adults could empathize with. They also learned acting skills and practiced for the entire semester before performing the play at the ICLAC's culminating event in June. Unlike the other three media classes, the theater class did not use specific technology tools; rather, they used their own bodies as media.

**A web of support for youth community engagement.** The ICLAC youth disseminated their media products in various ways. They made the most of social media such as Facebook and a public radio station, as well as traditional means of dissemination to reach out to those who might have had limited access to the Internet. This included distribution of *La Opinión* offline on a regular-basis in the neighborhood, so that community residents were able to hear from their voice. They periodically left batches of the flyers, posters, and *La Opinión* at local businesses and community organizations on the main street, including a grocery store, a liquor store, a barbershop, a bakery, restaurants, community health centers, an alternative high school, a local bike shop, and more. These places functioned as information centers, where many community residents picked up local information like program brochures, events calendars, *La Opinión* and the like.

It is important to note that many community organizations and local businesses, affiliates or supporters of the PRCC and connected with each other, were strong supporters of the ICLAC youth and their campaign. Some offered their space for the background of the photos on the posters (e.g. a barber shop and the alternative high school) and also for information distribution. Others more actively supported the youth by helping them demonstrate the positive alternatives themselves. For example, a bike shop offered ICLAC a free bike class, and a community health center gave a lecture on healthy eating so that the youth were able to see the anti-underage drinking campaign from a broader perspective of community health. Also, the youth organizing group called *Barrio* shared a space with ICLAC and also worked closely with ICLAC to encourage youth to organize and join the group's cultural events on Friday nights, where they could express themselves through hip-hop, poetry, dance, spoken word, singing, and more. Several teachers and the principal at the alternative high school (which several youth in ICLAC attended) often participated in ICLAC's events to support youth as well.

At the end of the semester, ICLAC invited the youth participants' friends, parents, family members, high school teachers, etc. to their public presentation. The event became a collective reflection opportunity for all the participants, in which youth presented their media products and talked about their learning experiences with the campaign and the community, as well as newly gained media skills.

### **Discussion: Connected and Transformative Education in the Digital Age**

I will now take up the question introduced in the beginning: Will the use of new media tools create a fundamental changes in social learning, or will Jane Addams' connected and transformative education remain essentially the same? In the specific case here the question is whether new media tools have given ICLAC's anti-underage drinking campaign a nature that would differentiate itself from Addams' socialized education of the old days? My answer is both yes and no.

**Interest in media and media ecology.** New media has indeed brought an unprecedented change to the ways youth express their thoughts and exercise their creativity. Many youth in radio and multimedia classes showed a keen interest in new media tools per se, which was the key motivation for their participation in ICLAC. For example, two students in the radio class, Cynthia and Adam, who identified themselves as musicians, joined the program because they could use the studio and sound equipment for their music production. Cynthia said, "It [the radio class] teaches how to use Pro Tools. Basically, they taught me how to use the Pro Tools, how to cut, edit, all that stuff, and I kept coming." Similarly, another student in the same radio class, Jose, said, "I like the sound system and plus audio equipment and ... producing beats stuff. I thought it would be great, and I joined the program" Steve, the instructor of the class, who was 20 years old and had once been a student of the program himself, said:

A lot of students came in with prior knowledge in reporting, or interested in rapping, but they've never got a chance to record anything. The ICLAC radio program was actually the first exposure to what the sound programs look like, what it was to chop up and edit, sound waves, and software, the state of the art software that people like Kanye West or whoever, just name the many artists, you know, they're using the software that we're teaching here, like Pro Tools and Garage Band.

The youth's intrinsic interest in new media formed a new terrain of learning in which to express themselves and communicate with the world in a creative manner. The youth in traditional media classes, such as print journalism and theater, also considered their interest in



the media as their main motivation for participating in the program. In the journalism class, Sofia, an aspiring journalist, said, “I like to write about stuff—essays, obituary, columns. I learned the basics. I love it...I go to college and study journalism at [a university].” In the theater class, Raul said, “To me, ICLAC means an opportunity get away from the streets and all the drama at home for a couple of hours. My favorite part of the program is acting with the theatre group and socializing with all of my peers.”

The above discussion shows that ICLAC’s anti-underage drinking campaign exemplifies a rich media ecology (Ito, et al., 2008). The distinction between new and traditional media was dissolved in the youth’s actual media practice; the mixed use of both new and traditional media contributed to an innovative change in the youth’s learning experiences in their campaign.

**Connected learning.** New media tools did not, in fact, fundamentally change the social learning dynamic as described by Addams. Despite the new features mediated by new media, the spirit of socialized education remained the same. Connected learning was among the most prominent features of ICLAC’s anti-underage drinking campaign. With an integration of their interests in media into an anti-underage drinking campaign, the youth were able to cultivate media skills and explore important issues of the community in a holistic way. They went out to the streets, met with people, gathered stories, and discovered positive images, in addition to creating beats and sounds on their own. Their learning process echoed Addams’ emphasis on everyday life experiences in learning:

If we admit that in education it is necessary to begin with the experiences which the child already has and to use his spontaneous and social activity, then the city streets begin this education for him in a more natural way than does the school (1902/2002, p. 83).

The city streets were a crucial space in ICLAC’s campaign as well, where the youth were able to make sense of their experience and obtain resources in order to produce culturally relevant and youth-friendly media products. The media ecology in the campaign, i.e., the mixed use of new and traditional media, contributed to the broadening of youth learning experiences in the community. Their media learning was profoundly constructed based on community learning, and the essence of the connected education articulated by Addams and Dewey still resounded in the ICLAC youth’s campaign. The youth described those learning experiences:

I learned how to use Pro Tools and incorporate it with our anti-underage drinking campaign. My favorite part of ICLAC is getting to work in my radio class as well as getting outside interviewing people (Marcela, Radio).

My most memorable experience in the ICLAC program was when we presented our anti-underage drinking podcast projects from the radio class. It felt good to be able to spread good information out to the community (Joes, Radio).

My favorite part of the program is when I get to help out my fellow peers in the radio program. Since I have been in the program for a good minute I pretty much understand how to work with the audio editing program also known as Pro Tools (Lita, Radio).

I learned about underage drinking. I interviewed people that I didn’t even know and knocked on doors. I would like to see ICLAC go out and interview even more people. ...I also wrote my first newspaper article, which was about the anti-underage drinking campaign. I hope that I can be a good writer when I grow up (Sofia, Journalism).

The skills I have learned have impacted the community, such as the anti-underage drinking campaign postcards we created. I think that people shouldn't be influenced by peer pressure, forcing youth to drink (Amy, Multimedia class).

Among the vital background elements of connected learning in this campaign was a strong web of support for youth community engagement across community organizations and local businesses (Ritzo et al., 2009), as well as family and friends: a high school, a community health center, a local newspaper, a bakery, a barbershop, liquor stores, *Barrio*, and others. This kind of support signaled to the youth that their effort was acknowledged in the community, which also assisted them with learning about local assets, history, and culture, thereby disputing a negative stereotype faced by the community. The youth understood that their campaign did not come out of a vacuum but rather was situated in a long history of community activism to better the condition of the community. In working with other groups in the community, youth were allowed to see the other issues of the community beyond the issue of underage drinking and in what social context their campaign was situated. This was deeply related to the comprehension of the broader social entrepreneurship of the community to improving community health, education, housing issues, local information circulation, and more.

**Transformative learning.** In real world situations, the two key features, connected learning and transformative learning, are interwoven with each other. The ICLAC youth's media products reflected their self-image as engaged, creative, and responsible young people ("This is the real me") on the basis of their everyday experiences. This contributed to the restoration of the social value of the youth's experience, which they already deserved but had been deprived of. Luis, a coordinator of ICLAC and also a community organizer himself, talked about his challenges in encouraging youth to get involved in the transformative experience, in spite of the tough realities young people might have to face.

Obviously, most them [the youth in ICLAC] have very rough experiences in this community with issues of violence and gangs from their whole family, substance abuse. Those kinds of things are real for them. So, how am I able to inspire them? How could you inspire people not only to see the beautiful things that exist here and struggles that people have done to produce them, but also the importance and the necessity to get involved in helping to continue those things?

The campaign helped the youth link themselves to the larger effort of the community for social change, beyond the issue of underage drinking. The youth were motivated to comprehend the social and cultural meaning of the community, which was a space for resistance to racism and social injustice, and for pride in their Puerto Rican identity. At the same time they formed a general understanding of what context their campaign was situated in and why the campaign was important to the community and to other oppressed groups in society.

One youth in the multimedia class said that in the beginning it was challenging for them to find images for positive alternatives, while it was easy to find negative images. They, nevertheless, were continuously encouraged to see the other side of the community, and were eventually able to successfully produce media products that showed the achievements and the positive aspects of the community.

It is noteworthy that a unique participatory culture within the community also played a pivotal role in the transformative educational practice in the campaign. Community organizations, schools, and local business not only valued the efforts the youth made for the community, but also inspired them to be part of the larger effort for social entrepreneurship within the community.

A student named Alicia in the multimedia class advocated for the community: “Some people think Huntington Park is a bad neighborhood, or a horrible neighborhood, but really it’s not. It’s just how people perceive it. This isn’t a bad community. Not every Latino drinks or does drugs or other stuff. Some people do it, some people don’t.” Likewise, many other youth reported that they were able to have different perspectives of the community and feel proud of their ethnic background and the community, and they stated that they would readily use the skills they obtained from ICLAC to make the community better, as seen below.

I do believe the skills I have learned can impact the community, especially when we get to perform the play in front of a big audience (Raul, Theater).

It [this radio PSA] might not completely end underage drinking but at least can change someone’s life (Cynthia, Radio).

My skills can impact my community because I can put knowledge into people that don’t know about the community or any obstacles that go throughout the community. ... My aspiration for my future is to help out or be part of the *Barrio* so that I could pass on many things that I know to other youth that live in the community or who want to know about the community, even though they do not live in the community (Lita, Radio).

I believe with the tech skills I know I can inform a lot of people on what goes on in this community. The anti-underage drinking campaign has been very knowledgeable, not only to the people in this community, but to me also. For my future I see me becoming a cop to help this community any way I can (Eric, Multimedia).

To me, ICLAC is like a place where people can learn more about this Puerto Rican community while also helping ourselves improve how we live. I have learned more about this community and its purpose to live and help to live (Sofia, Journalism).

I use to think Huntington Park was a negative place but I found out there are positive places and I wanted to help keep it as much as possible (Cate, Theater).

Steve, the 20-year-old radio program instructor, served as an example of a person this type of education produce can produce. He was once a student of the ICLAC radio program himself, where he harnessed radio production skills through the project, including the anti-underage drinking campaign. Also, in becoming more actively involved in a youth organizing group, *Barrio*, he became one of the new youth leaders in the community. Steve successfully graduated from high school, went on to college, and returned to the program as an instructor to help other youth in the radio program. Before long, he was chosen as a recipient of a prestigious fellowship program offered by Chicago Public Radio. The podcast that he had submitted for the fellowship competition contained his narrative and sounds of the community. His success and return to the community established him as an important example of a role model. At a community event, Luis introduced Steve, “In this community surrounded by all the things you see today, he was able to again find the alternative and do something with his life. That is the perfect example of what we can do.” Steve’s case portrays how connected and transformative learning in the community can leave a long-term impact not only on one’s life but also on the community for social change.

The ICLAC’s anti-underage drinking campaign demonstrated a good example of the holistic educational model in which youth look critically at the world and engage in an effort to better the community as connected with their ordinary experience. The new media tools, profoundly intertwined with those social learning practices, not only enriched the youth educational experiences but also contributed to social change.

## **Conclusion**

ICLAC's anti-underage drinking campaign extended beyond a simple program activity to illuminate a vision of engaged and transformative learning in the digital age. It resonated with the essence of Addams' socialized education, which is rooted in collective inquiry and action for social transformation along with respect for individuals' social experiences and cultural backgrounds. The youth created contextualized, culturally relevant, youth-friendly and positive messages based on ordinary experiences. Through their participation in the campaign, they learned about many positive aspects of the community and linked up with larger efforts toward community betterment, while contesting social prejudice by presenting different images than those found in the mainstream media.

The media ecology environment in ICLAC—the integrated usage of new and traditional media—enriched the way they made sense of experience and communicated with the world. Their campaign slogans were conveyed through multiple formats of information, flyers, posters, a play, radio PSAs, and a newspaper article. They connected their skills and experiences to the campaign, creating contextualized media activism as part of the community's unique participatory culture and practices. Although the youth's media practices were new and unprecedented, their work remained firmly rooted in the progressive education movement. In particular, under a strong tradition of social entrepreneurship in the community, many community organizations and local businesses encouraged youth to be part of a larger effort for community change as well.

An answer to the question introduced at the beginning of this paper can now be advanced. The ICLAC case shows that the essence of progressive education and social learning — that is, the ecological relationships between youth and community that are at the heart of Addams' connected and transformative education — will remain the same even when new media has an extensive and intrinsic role. Indeed, the synergistic relationship between new media ecology and connected learning environments will make progressive education even more effective in the digital age.

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