

THE INTERNET'S ROLE IN MAKING ENGAGED CITIZENS

Contrary to popular belief, new research finds that youth who pursue interests on the Internet are more likely to be civically and politically engaged.¹ Drawing on a panel survey of the online practices and the civic and political engagement of youth (ages 16–21), this new study, partially funded by CIRCLE, addresses broad and timely questions about the ways in which the Internet and digital media are impacting democratic and political engagement, particularly among youth.

The study's findings run counter to two commonly held assumptions: first, that the Internet makes exposure to divergent political viewpoints unlikely, the so-called "echo chamber" effect; and second, that the Internet promotes shallow activism among youth, so-called "slacktivism."

YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGING ONLINE, ALSO ENGAGING IN THE REAL-WORLD

This new research suggests that interacting online does not cause young people to drop out of their real-world communities. Young people in the study who became heavily involved in online communities tended to *increase* their offline volunteering, charity, and work with neighbors. According to Joseph Kahne, author of the study, education professor at Mills College and CIRCLE Advisory Board member, "Research demonstrates that many youth are disengaged from traditional forms of civic and political life but are very engaged with new media. Our study findings strongly suggest that there are ways to build on their engagement with digital media to foster engagement in civic life."

YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE STUDY WHO BECAME HEAVILY INVOLVED IN ONLINE COMMUNITIES TENDED TO *INCREASE* THEIR OFFLINE VOLUNTEERING, CHARITY, AND WORK WITH NEIGHBORS.

NO ECHO CHAMBER

For more than a decade, many authors and observers have worried that people go online to have their own political and ideological views confirmed, causing society to become more polarized. However, the new study finds that young people who see any political opinions online tend to see diverse opinions. (A larger concern is the substantial

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Tufts
UNIVERSITY

Jonathan M. Tisch
College of Citizenship
and Public Service

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THE RESEARCH ROUNDUP COLUMN HIGHLIGHTS RECENT RESEARCH FINDINGS COMMISSIONED OR GENERATED BY CIRCLE. ALSO INCLUDED IS AN UPDATE ON NEW CIRCLE PRODUCTS SUCH AS FACT SHEETS, RESEARCH ARTICLES, RESEARCH ABSTRACTS, BIBLIOGRAPHIES, AND DATASETS.

proportion, 34%, who don't see political opinions at all when they are online.)

RESEARCH SUGGESTS MEDIA LITERACY CAN BE TAUGHT

It is difficult to use the Internet and other new media effectively and responsibly, and therefore we need to know whether such skills can be taught. The new study examined how often students were required by schools to use the Internet to get information or different perspectives on political or social issues, how often they were given assignments to create something to put on the web, and also whether they had learned to assess the trustworthiness of online information.

THE STUDY SUGGESTS THAT STUDYING DIGITAL MEDIA IN THESE WAYS DRAMATICALLY INCREASED THE ODDS THAT STUDENTS WOULD BE EXPOSED TO DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES ONLINE AND WOULD ENGAGE ONLINE WITH CIVIC AND POLITICAL ISSUES.

The study suggests that studying digital media in these ways dramatically increased the odds that students would be exposed to diverse perspectives online and would engage online with civic and political issues. The study showed that young people are not all "digital natives," and that digital media literacy education substantially increases their exposure to diverse perspectives and boosts the likelihood of their engaging online with civic and political issues. These results have significant implications for school and after-school programs as well as for parents. Many young people will benefit if they learn how to tap into the full potential of digital media.

The results of this new study are consistent with research previously conducted by CIRCLE. For example, CIRCLE has found that young people who use new forms of electronic media for civic purposes tend to volunteer at higher rates than those who do not.

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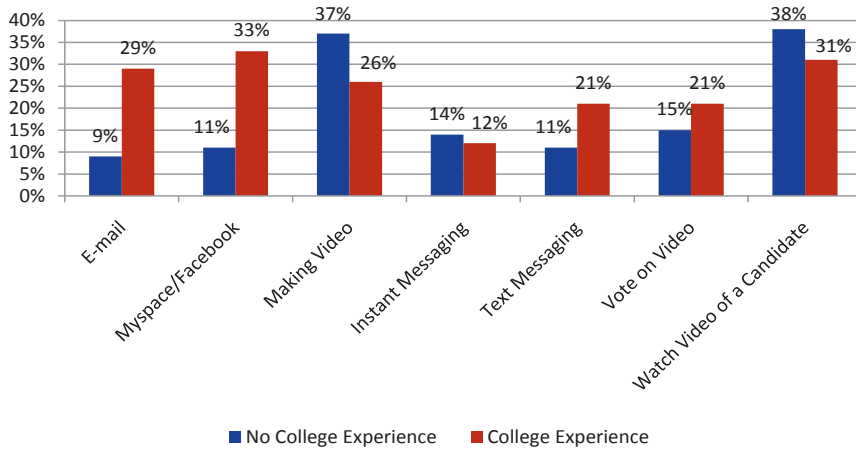
Lauren Young,
Spencer Foundation



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This is true for youth without college experience as well as youth with college experience. As shown below, non-college youth who use various types of media are 10 percent to almost 40 percent more likely to volunteer than their counterparts who do not use new media.

Graph 1: Percent Increase in Volunteering Associated with Media Use



Source: Emily Hoban Kirby, Karlo Barrios Marcelo, and Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, "Volunteering and College Experience," CIRCLE Fact Sheet, August 2009, using data from the National Conference on Citizenship's America's Civic Health Index survey, 2008.

To read more go to:

<http://www.civicyouth.org/the-internets-role-in-making-engaged-citizens/> ★

ENDNOTES

1 According to the report, "Interest-driven participation items asked how participants a) used the Internet to organize social or recreational events (games, concerts, dances, competitions), b) used the Internet to organize an online group, discussion or Web site, c) went online to participate in a special interest community, such as a fan site or a site where you talk with others about a hobby, sports, or special interest, d) gave someone you don't know feedback for something they wrote or put online, and e) was a leader in an online community" (11).



NEW CIRCLE FACT SHEET SHOWS YOUTH VOLUNTEERING RATES ON A DECLINE AFTER 2005 PEAK

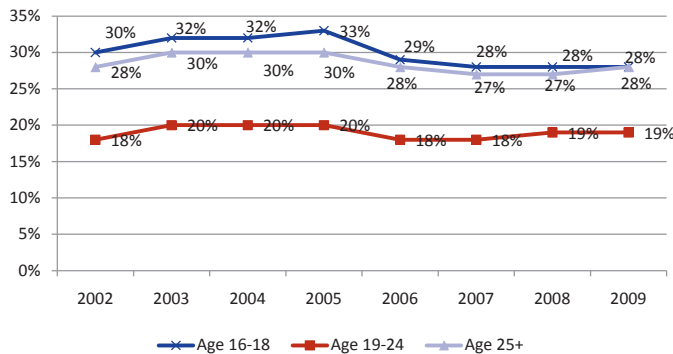
After peaking at 33% in 2005, the volunteering rate of 16- to 18-year-olds has been on a decline over the past four years (2006-2009), according to CIRCLE's latest fact sheet, "Youth Volunteering in the States: 2002 to 2009." Sixteen- to 18-year-olds, traditionally the most active age group in regards to volunteering, now volunteer (as of 2009) at a rate similar to those age 25 and above (28%), while 19- to 24-year-olds continue to participate at the lowest rate of the three groups (19%). While the decline is not precipitous, CIRCLE's data indicates a troubling trend: not only is the national volunteering rate of those ages 16 to 18 below the 2005 peak of 33%, but the rates since 2005 have been consistently lower than those from 2002 to 2005. Several states have tried to address lower volunteer rates among young people, with the implementation of community service and service-learning activities; despite these efforts, lower rates may be indicative of declining volunteering opportunities for youth.

Conversely, 19- to 24-year-olds typically volunteer at the lowest level of the three groups: 18 to 20 percent of youth age 19 to 24 volunteered between 2002 and 2009, with a current rate of 19%.

SEVERAL STATES HAVE TRIED TO ADDRESS LOWER VOLUNTEER RATES AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY SERVICE AND SERVICE-LEARNING ACTIVITIES.

Volunteer rates vary not only among age groups, but also among states. For example, in 2009 there was a 25-point gap between 19- to 24-year-olds in Utah (36%) and in Mississippi (9%) who reported volunteering. The states' civic cultures, the number of universities and nonprofits, and differences in states' general civic infrastructure may account for the variance, though research is needed to confirm these hypotheses.

Graph 1: National Volunteering Rate by Age Group



Source: Census Current Population Survey (CPS) September Supplement, 2002-2009

YOUTH VOLUNTEERING RATES VARY BY AGE AND STATE: 19- TO 24-YEAR-OLDS PARTICIPATE AT LOWEST RATE

CIRCLE's analysis of youth volunteering rates from 2002 to 2009 shows that participation varies by age group. Teenagers between 16 and 18 have typically led young people in volunteering rates, followed by those age 25 and over. However, the gap between these two groups has narrowed since 2002: 28% of people in each group reported volunteering in 2009.

Table 1: Lowest Volunteer Rates among 19-to 24-year-olds, 2009

Lowest Ranking	State	Volunteer Rate
1	Mississippi	9%
2	Louisiana	10%
3	New York	11%
4	Nevada	12%
5	Massachusetts	13%
5	West Virginia	13%

Source: Census Current Population Survey (CPS) September Supplement, 2009

Table 2: Highest Volunteer Rates among 19-to 24-year-olds, 2009

Top Ranking	State	Volunteer Rate
1	Utah	36%
2	Wisconsin	33%
3	Maine	32%
4	District of Columbia	29%
5	Iowa	27%
5	South Dakota	27%
5	Washington	27%

Source: Census Current Population Survey (CPS) September Supplement, 2009

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BOSTON, TWIN CITIES, AND SEATTLE VOLUNTEERING PATTERNS MIMIC NATIONAL TRENDS

CIRCLE's latest research shows that volunteering rates vary not only among states and age groups over time, but also by locality. To understand these differences, the volunteering patterns in Boston, the Twin Cities region, and the Seattle metropolitan areas were closely analyzed. Boston was chosen because of its high concentration of colleges, universities and non-profit organizations, whereas the Twin Cities region (Minneapolis-St. Paul) was selected because of its high level of overall civic engagement. Seattle was also included, due to its strong youth volunteering base. All three areas indeed have rates of volunteering well above the national averages, but the analysis shows that national trends still apply in these locales as well.

EVEN IN LOCATIONS WITH ROBUST SERVICE-RELATED INFRASTRUCTURE, STRONG CIVIC CULTURES, AND HIGH RATES OF VOLUNTEERISM, THE GAP BETWEEN 19- TO 24-YEAR-OLDS AND BOTH THEIR YOUNGER (AGES 16 TO 18) AND OLDER (AGE 25 AND OVER) COUNTERPARTS CAN BE SEEN.

Even in locations with robust service-related infrastructure, strong civic cultures, and high rates of volunteerism, the gap between 19- to 24-year-olds and both their younger (ages 16 to 18) and older (age 25 and over) counterparts can be seen. CIRCLE's research points to the transience of this age group (noted in Boston's sizeable student population) and the decreased likelihood that they will be asked to volunteer (noted in Seattle). Specifically, the data shows that 6.1% of 19- to 24-year-olds in Boston volunteer on a consistent basis, compared to 13.2% of their younger counterparts (those ages 16 to 18) and 12.3% of their older counterparts. According to the data in Seattle, 15.9% of those age 25 and above report being asked to volunteer. Conversely, only 11.9% of youth ages 19 to 24 report being asked to serve.

In the Twin Cities area, which has a strong civic culture and numerous opportunities to serve, 19- to 24-year-olds still volunteer at the lowest rates among all age groups.

A MOVE TOWARD THE INTEGRATION OF VOLUNTEERING INTO K-12 CURRICULA, BUT RESULTS NOT YET CLEAR

As of 2008, 68% of schools offer community service opportunities, up from 64% in 1999. In fact, Maryland and the District of Columbia mandate that all students volunteer or participate in service-learning in order to graduate. Despite the enactment of this policy in 1992, Maryland's average volunteer rate has been lower in the past four years (2006-2009) than in the previous four years (2002-2005) by a difference of ten percentage points. Although community service opportunities are now available in more schools than they were a decade ago, service-learning opportunities are down nearly ten points over the same time period (32% in 1999 to 24% in 2008).

An additional factor that complicates the assessment of initiatives to incorporate service into K-12 curricula is that implementation varies among states and even districts. States may apply their standards differently, and counties and districts within these states sometimes have their own specific policies and implementation procedures. Currently, sample sizes at the district level are too small to draw meaningful and statistically significant conclusions.

CIRCLE and others will be looking closely at the outcomes of such initiatives to assess their impact on youth service and civic engagement in general.

This fact sheet on volunteering can be found at <http://www.civicyouth.org/featured-youth-volunteering-in-the-states-2002-to-2009/> ★



THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIC CULTURE: COMPARING MIAMI AND MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL

The following two articles highlight reports on the civic health of several states and two cities. These reports were a joint effort between the National Conference on Citizenship, local nonprofit organizations, and CIRCLE.

On January 24, 2011, the National Conference on Citizenship, The Florida Joint Center for Citizenship, and the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at Augsburg College in Minneapolis released a major new report entitled *Tale of Two Cities: Civic Health in Miami and Minneapolis-St. Paul*. CIRCLE contributed to the research, and CIRCLE staff members Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg and Peter Levine were co-authors. The full report is available from the National Conference on Citizenship at www.ncoc.net/TwoCitiesCHI.

DATA SHOW STARKLY DIFFERENT CIVIC CULTURES IN MIAMI AND MINNEAPOLIS

Miami is the least civically engaged major city in the country and Minneapolis-St. Paul is the most engaged, according to measures included in the annual Census Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS provides data on volunteering, voting, membership in voluntary groups and associations, exchanging favors with neighbors, use of the news media, discussion of current events, and everyday forms of sociability, such as entertaining friends. Miami and Minneapolis-St. Paul have markedly different demographics, but those differences do not explain the civic engagement gap. In both communities (as elsewhere in the United States), people with more education and income tend to engage more in civic affairs. But individuals in Minneapolis-St. Paul who are in the lowest income group are more likely to volunteer, attend public meetings, work with neighbors, participate in politics outside of elections, and participate in associations than are people in the wealthiest tier in Miami. An individual with a high school education in Minneapolis-St. Paul is about as likely to be engaged as an individual with a college education in Miami. The report argues that the civic gap between Minneapolis-St. Paul and Miami reflects divergent attitudes toward citizenship and public work that permeate these metropolitan areas' institutions (public, nonprofit, and private) and that cause them to use different strategies and practices on a daily basis.

The report argues that the civic culture of Minneapolis-St. Paul is oriented toward enlisting diverse people—paid employees as well as volunteers—in a common project of shaping the area's future without abandoning their own cultural backgrounds and

values. Those norms are less evident in the Miami area, which appears to be more balkanized and less reliant on citizens to create a common future.

“OVER THE NEXT GENERATION, AMERICA WILL LOOK MORE LIKE MIAMI THAN MINNEAPOLIS, AND THE CHALLENGE OF EMPOWERMENT IN THE FACE OF CHANGE AND DIVERSITY THAT MIAMI FACES TODAY WILL BE ECHOED IN COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE NATION,” SAID FORMER SENATOR BOB GRAHAM (D-FL). “THE LESSONS LEARNED HERE WILL HAVE IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE .”

CREATING CULTURAL SHIFTS TOWARD ENGAGEMENT

The CPS does not measure everything. It is not designed to tell us about the content of civic experiences: what people do when they volunteer or join groups. Nor does it reveal their values, motivations, and goals. Finally, it measures only unpaid, voluntary acts, from voting to volunteering. People can also be active citizens as part of their paid work. For example, the Minneapolis Police Department has won awards for community policing, an example of civic engagement that is woven into professional practices. In the report, Harry Boyte, co-director of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship, provides a historical and interpretive portrait of civic culture in the Twin Cities that should inspire similar strategies everywhere.

“It is important to understand [the] underlying factors that contribute to the vitality of a civic culture of engagement,” said Bob Graham, former U. S. Senator, Florida Governor, and life-long Miami resident. “While Miami’s unique demographics do not fully explain its low level of civic engagement, the combination of rapid growth and extraordinary diversity define a social, economic, and political context within which citizens and community leaders must find a way to create a culture of engagement. Over the next generation, America will look more like Miami than Minneapolis, and the challenge of empowerment in the face of change and diversity that Miami faces today will be echoed in communities across the nation. The lessons learned here will have important implications for the future.” ★



NEW REPORTS AVAILABLE ON THE CIVIC HEALTH OF PA, MD, NY, OK, IL, AND CHICAGO, SHOW AGE GAPS IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The last issue of *Around the CIRCLE* summarized reports on the civic health of Missouri, Arizona, North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, California and the Greater Seattle metropolitan area. Since then, reports on the civic health of Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, Oklahoma, Illinois, and the Chicagoland region have been released.¹

These reports, produced by the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), seek to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of states' civic health. CIRCLE contributed to the analysis for the state-specific data. This article summarizes the major findings of the latest state reports.

YOUNG PEOPLE STAY CONNECTED TO NEWS AND FAMILY VIA TECHNOLOGY

Research shows a relationship between access to the news and civic engagement: those who follow the news are more likely to engage in a variety of civic activities. According to many of the state reports, young people follow the news at lower rates than their adult counterparts.² Despite lower levels of attentiveness to the news, young people in many states are using technology to obtain the news. In Maryland, for instance, Millennials are the most likely to access current events through the Internet (30.8% versus 22.8% for Generation X, 22.0% for Boomers, and 15.0% for the Silent Generation). Providing more opportunities or incentives for Millennials to follow the news via the Internet is a potential pathway to getting young people engaged in civic life.

HAVING CLOSE TIES WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND NEIGHBORS IS BELIEVED TO BE A FOUNDATION OF GOOD CIVIC HEALTH, AND IN FACT, RESEARCH FINDS A STRONG RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONNECTING WITH OTHERS AND SEVERAL FORMS OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION.

Having close ties with family, friends, and neighbors is believed to be a foundation of good civic health, and in fact, research finds a strong relationship between connecting with others and several forms of civic participation. Nationally, young Americans are less likely to have face-to-face contact with family and neighbors than older adults but instead are more likely to keep in close touch with family and friends using the Internet. Similarly, in New York, Millennials

were the age group most likely to report using an electronic tool to communicate with family and friends (62% versus 46% for adults aged 35-54, and 32% for over 55).

YOUTH IN NEW YORK AND PENNSYLVANIA VOLUNTEER AT LOWER RATES THAN THEIR ADULT COUNTERPARTS

Nationally, young people are volunteering at lower levels than their adults counterparts. Many states also found this pattern. In New York, age was found to be a predictor of volunteering. Fourteen percent of 16-to 24-year-olds in New York were volunteers, compared to almost a quarter of 44-to 55-year-olds. Similarly, Millennial Pennsylvanians were the least likely along with those born in 1930 or before, to get involved in their neighborhoods. (The Millennials' rate was 4.6%.) Even so, Millennials show promise; volunteering rates are slightly higher for Millennials now than they were for Boomers when they were the same age.³ The Internet and technology could provide venues for young people to hear about opportunities and get involved.⁴

CIVIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS SEEK TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE

Several state reports highlighted the need for stronger civics education programs in schools. *The Illinois Civic Health Index*, for example, recommended a holistic civic education approach, which included community-based learning, a family structure with models of civic participation, and a government institution that nurtures civic engagement. Maryland has broken new ground, as the first and only state to require service-learning as a condition for high school graduation. On the other hand, the Oklahoma report showed that slightly less than a third (29%) of students in the state were involved in community service, service-learning, and civic engagement activities.

YOUTH VOTER TURNOUT UP IN 2008, BUT GENERATIONAL GAPS STILL PERSIST

Nationally, youth voter turnout increased between 2000 and 2008. However, young people still vote at lower rates than their adult counterparts, and this gap is growing in some states. Pennsylvania, for instance, saw a decrease in youth voter turnout. Maryland, which ranks in the top third for voter turnout, found that

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DO INTERACTIONS WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM HAVE CIVIC EFFECTS?

CIRCLE focuses on the half of the youth population without college experience. For many youth in low-income communities, the criminal justice system has significant effects on everyday life. Because of a lack of data, it is difficult to understand the civic effects of interactions with the criminal justice system. This article, however, summarizes some existing published research.¹

INTERACTION WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM NEGATIVELY IMPACTS CIVIC EFFICACY

In their analysis of youth in the *National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health* and the *Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study*, Vesla M. Weaver and Amy E. Lerman find that increasing contact with the criminal justice system decreases the likelihood of civic and political participation later in life. “Even a minor encounter with the police that did not result in arrest is associated with a reduced likelihood of turning out in an election.”² (*The Fragile Families* dataset includes a measure of ineligibility to vote.)

“EVEN A MINOR ENCOUNTER WITH THE POLICE THAT DID NOT RESULT IN ARREST IS ASSOCIATED WITH A REDUCED LIKELIHOOD OF TURNING OUT IN AN ELECTION.”

In an analysis of *Black Youth Project Survey* data, Amir Fairdosi finds that “the act of being arrested has a negative and statistically significant impact on almost all indicators of political efficacy” regardless of race and ethnicity.³ Christopher Uggen and Jeff Manza (2006) find a similar dynamic with respect to efficacy and trust in their analysis of longitudinal data from St. Paul, Minnesota.⁴

Uggen and Manza also find that youth who were incarcerated are less likely (when compared to their peers who have been arrested but not convicted or not arrested at all) to trust the government or believe in their own ability to affect the government (“efficacy”).⁵

Incarceration also has an indirect effect on a person’s civic propensities through long-term effects on wages and employment.⁶ In contrast, according to literature on the “transition to adulthood,” work and the workplace expose young people to skills,

resources, people, and opportunities that provide a gateway to civic life.⁷ Civic-related youth programs that provide work experiences can have a similar effect, such as Youth Corps⁸ and AmeriCorps.⁹

CIVIC PARTICIPATION CAN POTENTIALLY REDUCE RECIDIVISM

Christopher Uggen and Jennifer Janikula find that civic participation can be a preventive force against arrest and interaction with the criminal justice system. Their study examines the impact of volunteering on recidivism rates. The majority of volunteers in the study focus on what they call ‘secular-civic’ activities, or “activities [that] occur outside a religious, partisan, or private business setting.”¹⁰ The results show that “only three percent of the volunteers were arrested in the four years following high school, compared to 11% of the non-volunteers.”¹¹ An evaluation of the National Guard Youth ChallenNGe program, which has a community service component, finds that the study’s control group is more likely to be arrested, convicted or incarcerated.¹² Other research finds similar results with juvenile offenders.¹³ YouthBuild is a program focused on building low-income youth’s job skills, educational credentials and community-focused leadership. An evaluation of the YouthBuild Youth Offender grants (conducted between 2004-2006) finds that 75% of participants at the time of data collection (April and December 2007) had “no further conviction or revocation of probation/parole.”¹⁴ Additionally, Mark Cohen and Alex Piquero analyzed a subset of this program data and also found that offending among YouthBuild graduates decreased and educational outcomes increased.¹⁵

RESEARCH HAS ALSO FOCUSED ON RE-ENTRY INTO CIVIL SOCIETY AFTER INCARCERATION AS A PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TIME WITH RESPECT TO WHAT CHRISTOPHER UGGEN AND COLLEAGUES CALL “CIVIC REINTEGRATION.”

Research has also focused on re-entry into civil society after incarceration as a particularly important time with respect to what Christopher Uggen and colleagues call “civic reintegration.”¹⁶ Gordon Bazemore and Carsten Erbe provide a theoretical background on this model.¹⁷



CIRCLE IN THE NEWS

- "IN POLITICAL GAME, THEY'RE THE FARM TEAM," BY JENNIFER MYERS, *LOWELL SUN*, 2/7/2011
- "WHY MIAMI CIVIC HEALTH IS LOWEST IN NATION - AND THE TWIN CITIES IS TOPS," BY DOUG DOBSON, *WESTSIDE GAZETTE*, 2/2/2011
- "VOLUNTEERING SPIRIT CATCHES FIRE," BY LINDA MATCHAN, *BOSTON GLOBE*, 2/1/2011
- "MENTORING PROGRAM TURNS CAMERAS ON ITS YOUNG CLIENTS," *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, BY JANE L. LEVERE, 1/21/2011
- "GOV. CHRISTIE'S FIRST YEAR: IN PERSON OR ONLINE, CHRISTIE'S PERSONA IS 'ONE OF THE PEOPLE,'" BY JASON METHOD, *MYCENTRALJERSEY.COM*, 1/1/2011
- "IF WE REQUIRE DRIVER'S ED FOR TEENS, THEN WHY NOT VOTER'S ED?," BY ALEXANDER HEFFNER, *CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR*, 12/27/2010
- "DREAM'S ON THE RISE NOW, AND NOTHING CAN KILL IT," BY JESSICA RITTER, *OREGON LIVE*, 12/21/2010
- "REPORT SHOWS THAT OKLAHOMANS HAVE SOME GOOD TRAITS," *TULSA BEACON*, 12/9/2010
- "THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT," BY KATIE ROHMAN, *NILES (MI) DAILY STAR*, 12/8/2010
- "PUBLIC SERVICE FOSTERS A STRONGER COMMUNITY," BY CAITLIN HUEY-BURNS, *CHICAGO TRIBUNE*, 11/25/2010

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These research studies provide helpful information for understanding the factors that influence the civic engagement of young people who have had interactions with the criminal justice system. In particular, it suggests that civic stratification - systems that provide more or less opportunities - are at work in young peoples' transition to adulthood. ★

ENDNOTES

- 1 Note that in the criminal justice field, "juveniles" are generally defined as people under eighteen years of age. CIRCLE, however, studies "youth," defined as people between the age of roughly 16 to 30. We are interested in the civic development of young people who have interacted with the justice system, because they are often believed to be marginalized.
- 2 Vesla M. Weaver & Amy E. Lerman, "Political Consequences of the Carceral State," *American Political Science Review*, 2010, volume 104 (4), 817-833.
- 3 Amir Fairdosi (n.d.), "Arrested Development," retrieved from <http://www.blackyouthproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/Arrested-Development-FINAL.pdf>
- 4 Christopher Uggen & Jeff Manza, *Locked Out: Felon Disenfranchisement and American Democracy*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- 5 *ibid*
- 6 Richard B. Freeman, "Crime and the Employment of Disadvantaged Youths," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series: Working Paper No. 3875, 1991. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/papers/w3875>; Becky Pettit & Bruce Western, "Incarceration and Social Inequality," *Daedalus*, (2010), 139 (3), 8-19; Robert J. Sampson & John H. Laub, *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points Through Life*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
- 7 Andrea Finlay, Constance Flanagan & Laura Wray-Lake, "Civic Engagement Patterns and Transitions Over Eight Years: The AmeriCorps National Study," Manuscript submitted for publication, 2011.
- 8 JoAnn Jastrzab, John Blomquist, Julie Masker & Larry Orr, "Youth Corps: Promising Strategies for Young People and Their Communities," 1997. Retrieved from <http://www.abtassoc.com/reports/Youth-Corps.pdf>
- 9 Andrea Finlay, Laura Wray-Lake & Constance Flanagan, "Civic Engagement During the Transition to Adulthood: Developmental Opportunities and Social Policies at a Critical Juncture." In L. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta, & C. Flanagan, *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement in Youth*, (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010).
- 10 Christopher Uggen & Jennifer Janikula, "Volunteerism and Arrest in the Transition to Adulthood," *Social Forces*, 1999, 78 (1), 331-362.
- 11 *Ibid*
- 12 Dan Bloom, Alissa Gardenhire-Crooks & Conrad Mandsager, "Reengaging High School Dropouts: Early Results of the National Guard Youth Challenge Program Evaluation," 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.mdc.org/publications/512/overview.html>
- 13 Jeffrey A. Butts & Howard Snyder, "Restitution and Juvenile Recidivism," Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1992.
- 14 Wally Abrazaldo, et al., "Evaluation of the YouthBuild Youth Offender Grants," 2009, retrieved from http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText_Documents/Evaluation%20of%20the%20YouthBuild%20Youth%20Offender%20Grants%20%2D%20Final%20Report%2Epdf
- 15 Mark A. Cohen & Alex R. Piquero, "An Outcome Evaluation of the YouthBuild USA Offender Project," *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 2010, 8, 373-385.
- 16 Christopher Uggen, Jeff Manza & Angela Behrens, "Less Than the Average Citizen: Stigma, Role Transition and the Civic Reintegration of Convicted Felons," In S. Maruna & R. Immarigeon (Eds.), *After Crime and Punishment*, (Portland, OR: Willan Publishing, 2004), 258-290; Christopher Uggen, "Barriers to Democratic Participation. The Urban Institute: Prisoner Reentry and the Institutions of Civil Society: Bridges and Barriers to Successful Reintegration," 2002, retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/publications/410801.html>
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FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE, A COLUMN DEDICATED TO RECOGNIZING SUCCESSFUL “BRIDGES” BETWEEN RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS, REPORTS ON RESEARCH WITH PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

STATE CIVIC HEALTH REPORTS ARE UNCOVERING INEQUALITY AND PUSHING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

This past fall, 17 states each released their own versions of a Civic Health Index (CHI) with the assistance and support of the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) and CIRCLE. For the majority of these states, theirs was the first report of its kind, assessing levels of civic involvement among all residents and various demographic groups. Each state’s CHI planning group is different, as are each state’s results, leading to a variety of applications of CHI data. But all of the reports are indeed pushing conversations about how to broaden participation in communities.

MISSOURI

Mike Stout, professor of Sociology at Missouri State University (MSU), has coordinated the group working on the *Missouri Civic Health Index*. The ultimate goal of the *Missouri CHI*, according to Stout, is to introduce into policy discourse how regular people are thinking and talking about policy issues. At the same time and through the development and dissemination of the *Missouri CHI*, Stout and his MSU colleagues are actively trying to reframe the role of sociology at MSU as a publicly- focused discipline.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF THE MISSOURI CHI, ACCORDING TO STOUT, IS TO INTRODUCE INTO POLICY DISCOURSE HOW REGULAR PEOPLE ARE THINKING AND TALKING ABOUT POLICY ISSUES.

The central assumptions of the *Missouri CHI*, as Stout explains, are that “in order to do effective economic development you have to have a strong civil society,” and that the “civic sector” plays a large role in community development. As a result, the *Missouri CHI* will be distributed to policymakers and civic leaders to use when making decisions so that they can “make better decisions on behalf of communities that they are representing.” Additionally, Stout thinks the *Missouri CHI* shows how “process matters, [and that] our process is broken.”

According to Brian Fogle, President of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, the *Missouri CHI* continues the important work of using research on social capital to help “us understand what’s going on in communities.” The MSU Sociology Department has been doing additional surveys of social capital that go into even greater detail about Missouri communities. Fogle believes that this research is having an impact, and states that “in many conversations I’m in these days people are talking about social capital.” In particular, he says, this research is helping to reveal the relationships between specific communities in Missouri and government.

While the *Missouri CHI* indicates that “less-educated Missourians are participants and leaders at higher rates than residents of other states,” there remains a large income gap in some forms of participation. For example, “Missourians with family incomes above \$75,000 are more than three times [as] likely to have attended a public meeting than those with family incomes lower than \$35,000, and they are almost two times more likely to have attended a public meeting compared with those whose family incomes are between \$50,000-74,999.”

NORTH CAROLINA

The key findings of the *North Carolina Civic Health Index* show crucial gaps in participation and leadership that worry participating organizations. Two such findings are that young people in North Carolina “are the least civically engaged of any age group” in the state and that North Carolina’s civic organizations are “led by a small group of older, churchgoing, college-educated, mostly white residents.” The *North Carolina CHI* is a collaboration between five organizations that had not worked together before, representing diverse civic organizations within the state: Democracy North Carolina, North Carolina Campus Compact, North Carolina Center for Voter Education, North Carolina Civic Education Consortium and the Department of Public Policy at Western Carolina University. The breadth of the coalition will promote action on the key findings.



North Carolina Campus Compact and the North Carolina Civic Education Consortium asked college students to discuss what can be done to increase the participation of young people. The discussion occurred at North Carolina Campus Compact's annual student conference, which gathered almost 300 students from around the state. (North Carolina Campus Compact is a coalition of 46 higher education institutions.) Students broke up into small groups at the event to discuss the *North Carolina CHI* research, what may contribute to low youth participation rates in North Carolina, and what they themselves can do individually and collectively to increase engagement.

O'BRIEN EXPLAINS THAT THE NORTH CAROLINA CHI SHOWS THAT "PEOPLE NEED PROMPTING AND CONSTANT EDUCATION AND SUPPORT" AND THAT "THERE'S CLEARLY A NEED FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL WORK TO BUILD A PIPELINE OF DIVERSE LEADERS."

To Kelley O'Brien, the *North Carolina CHI* shows how civic engagement is not just about developing a "spectrum" of opportunities. O'Brien explains that the *North Carolina CHI* shows that "people need prompting and constant education and support" and that "there's clearly a need for out-of-school work to build a pipeline of diverse leaders." In her own work with the Civic Education Consortium, O'Brien says she wants to "think more about how we engage young people of all socio-economic levels in leadership opportunities."

These and other state civic health indices can be found at <http://ncoc.net/states>. ★



NEW ON CIVICYOUTH.ORG!

How have you used CIRCLE research?

Want to see how others have?

We'd love to know how you used some of our research and give others ideas.

Go to: <http://www.civicyouth.org/tools-for-practice/research-to-practice/> to learn more

Examples of How Others Use CIRCLE Research

1. House Resolution 181, now pending before the US House of Representatives, cites CIRCLE research in three clauses.
2. The State of Washington was inspired by CIRCLE's research to:
 - Develop a K-12 mock election and an accompanying curriculum book to encourage the formation of early voting habits.
 - Invite teachers to the capitol for civic education training
 - Organize college students at 65 campuses
 - Focus on civic education for minority students and low-income students in vocational programs
 - Host an annual panel of legislators to discuss civility in politics with students
3. Rev. Lennox Yearwood, Jr. President of the Hip Hop Caucus, writes, "CIRCLE is a critical resource for groups like the Hip Hop Caucus and others who are trying to engage young people in the political process. Research directs our strategy for our work in the community, and the team at CIRCLE is always willing to provide us with the data and analysis that we need in order to have real impact and to reach the young people who are the least civically engaged."

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Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) were the most likely to have voted (74.4%), while Millennials (born after 1980) were the least likely to have voted (55.5%). In Chicagoland, Baby Boomers were the most likely to vote (68.3%), and Millennials were least likely to vote (49.9%). Both reports found rates comparable to, or higher than, the national averages. However, both reports identified the need to close the gap in voter turnout and many states noted that initiatives are being considered to increase youth voter turnout. The "Campus Vote" initiative, discussed in Oklahoma's report, has been responsible for registering more than 18,000 voters on college campuses in the past seven years.

For more information, or to read full reports go to <http://ncoc.net/states>. ★

ENDNOTES

- 1 The Texas Civic Health Report has not yet been released. Florida state partners have opted to do a series of civic health fact sheets, which will be released at different times.
- 2 *2010 Civic Health Assessment: Executive Summary*. Retrieved from the National Corporation on Citizenship website: <http://www.ncoc.net/CHAExecutiveSummary2010>
- 3 <http://ncoc.net/index.php?tray=content&tid=top18&cid=225>. This finding is not calculated via the Census Current Population Survey (CPS).
4. Ibid

