

CIRCLE IS 10!

The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) was founded in July 2001, with a first generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts. Since then, our organization has evolved, grown, learned, diversified our funding and activities, and moved from the University of Maryland to the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship & Public Service at Tufts University. This special tenth anniversary issue of Around the CIRCLE is devoted to an overview of our first decade.

CIRCLE: WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE'VE DONE & WHERE WE ARE HEADED

BY: PETER LEVINE, DIRECTOR OF CIRCLE

CIRCLE conducts research on civic education in schools, colleges, and community settings and on young Americans' voting and political participation, service, activism, media use, and other forms of civic engagement. All our research is intended to help strengthen youth participation in our democracy.

We have not selected this topic for its academic interest. Today's national and global problems are serious and dangerous. Whether Americans are most concerned about a high school dropout rate of one third, homeland security threats, the Wall Street meltdown, or global warming, we cannot count on leaders and policies to solve our problems for us. The public must provide the will, energy, ideas, creativity, and resources to make significant progress.

COLLABORATION IS THE GENIUS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY.

The United States has never overcome any major challenges without tapping the skills, energies, and passions of millions of our citizens. Collaboration is the genius of American democracy. But surveys show that collaboration and problem-solving are in decline. People are substantially less likely to work on community projects or to attend meetings than they were a generation ago. Core components of our traditional civil society—daily newspapers, unions, and national voluntary associations—are in decline. To be sure, Americans have opportunities to build a new and possibly a better civil society out of novel components (including online tools). But rebuilding will take careful thinking and hard work; it will not occur automatically.

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Tufts
UNIVERSITY

Jonathan M. Tisch
College of Citizenship
and Public Service

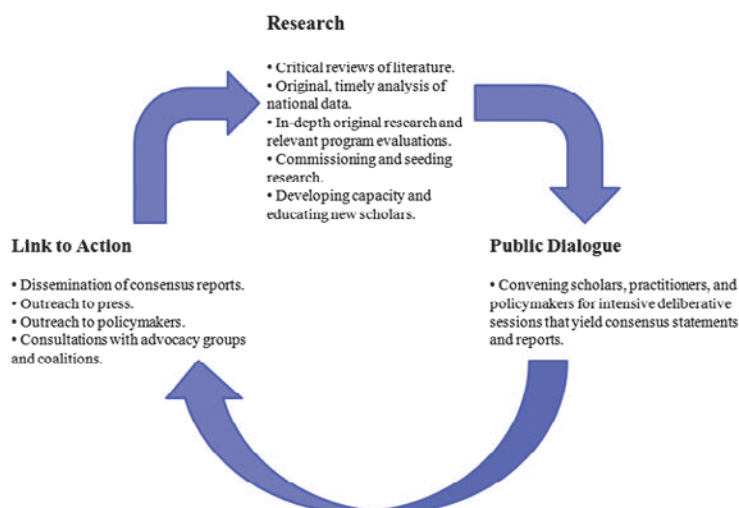
NOVEMBER 2011

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Renewing civil society must start with youth. Very few interventions have lasting impact on adults' civic behavior, but numerous programs that target youth have been found to develop habits of civic participation. At the same time, many of the declines in traditional civil society are generational, with each new cohort of Americans less engaged than its predecessors. Re-engaging youth requires a concern with equity and inclusion, because disparities in the level of civic participation are now stark and dangerous.

CIRCLE'S MODEL AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In our first decade, CIRCLE has begun to address this problem with a cycle of activities that includes original research studies and program evaluations, outreach to the press and the public, conferences of experts who help us write consensus reports, and engagement with practitioners, policymakers, and youth—who, in turn, inform our research agenda.



This research-dialogue-action cycle has had tangible outcomes. First, CIRCLE has built the research field. When our organization was founded in 2001, there was still only a trickle of research on the civic engagement and learning of young people. The body of literature was strikingly small, considering that the future of our democracy depends on the preparation of young citizens. Furthermore, scholarship had little impact on practice. Educational policies, classroom strategies at all levels (from kindergarten to graduate school), community service programs, and the efforts of political campaigns and the news media to reach young audiences were some of the areas of practice that were conspicuously uninfluenced by theory or research about young people as citizens.

ALTHOUGH CIRCLE IS NOT SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS CHANGE, INDEPENDENT EXPERTS ACKNOWLEDGE CIRCLE'S IMPORTANT ROLE IN MOVING THE RESEARCH ON YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FROM A TRICKLE TO A TORRENT.

Today this situation is dramatically different. The torrent of research on youth civic engagement includes highly technical articles and monographs—even a new 706-page scholarly handbook—as well as popular magazine articles and books, such as *Citizen You: Doing Your Part to Change the World* by Jonathan Tisch, Karl Weber, and Mayor Cory Booker.¹ Interdisciplinary research conferences and sessions seem to occur every few months.

Although CIRCLE is not solely responsible for this change, independent experts acknowledge CIRCLE's important role in moving the research on youth civic engagement from a trickle to a torrent. Harvard University Professor Robert Putnam has said of CIRCLE: "You've brought the best and most serious research to one place. You've applied an expert screen on the research. It's a crucial contribution to the field. It's a model for policy relevant and academic debates. [It's] useful to have someone studying the issue who's outside the debate and can be a reliable source for information."

Second, CIRCLE has begun to change public discourse and press coverage about young people as citizens. Teenagers and young adults are beginning to be seen more positively, as contributors or potential contributors to civil society. At the same time, disparities among youth are more widely recognized—in particular, the differences in civic engagement by ideology and by social class.

Although CIRCLE now uses social media to engage the public directly, we continue to work with professional reporters to influence public dialogue through the news media. CIRCLE's research has been cited in most national newspapers, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Los Angeles Times*, and on CNN, NPR, PBS, MTV, and Fox News. In the months between July 2008 and the 2008 presidential election, CIRCLE was cited in 1,253 newspaper, magazine, broadcast, or web stories, including 829 print media articles. Nonprofits and government agencies also regularly consult us and other researchers.

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Third, CIRCLE has substantially influenced the field of civic education in k-12 schools. When CIRCLE was founded, it was still the “accepted wisdom in the political science profession” that high school courses on civics, government, current issues, law, and American history had “little or no effect on the vast majority of students.”² Civic education was a neglected public priority, and academic research was largely irrelevant to it.

However, by 2001, evidence was beginning to emerge that schools could help young people to develop civic skills and commitments. In 2003, working with Carnegie Corporation of New York, CIRCLE convened some 60 experts on civic education for a series of face-to-face discussions. We provided participants with original statistics from national polls and assessments. Although the participants represented organizations as diverse as the Heritage Foundation and the two national teachers’ unions (as well as independent scholars from several disciplines), they were able to reach consensus and write a joint report entitled *The Civic Mission of Schools*.

The report was the subject of a syndicated column by David Broder, several unsigned editorials, and numerous news stories. Copies were distributed at a White House Forum on History, Civics, and Service and a Congressional Conference on Civic Education, among other events in the first year after its launch. More than 30,000 copies were requested.

The *Civic Mission of Schools* then became the charter for the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, an advocacy coalition comprising more than forty groups. The campaign’s National Advisory Council is co-chaired by retired Justice Sandra Day O’Connor and former Congressman Lee Hamilton. It is the leading advocacy organization for civic education.

After the Campaign’s launch, CIRCLE returned to independent research on civic education. In fact, we have published work that has complicated some of the recommendations presented in the *Civic Mission of Schools* report.

Fourth, CIRCLE has changed political campaigns in America by helping to show that it is cost-effective to mobilize people between the ages of 18 and 30. From 1972 until 2002, youth voting was basically in decline in the United States. Many explanations could be offered, but one contributing factor was the tendency of campaigns to write off young people. The 1970s

began with moderately low youth turnout, and political professionals believed it would be wasteful to try to mobilize people under 30. Sometimes, campaigns would scan contact lists for younger citizens and delete them as low-probability voters. The result of not being contacted was even lower turnout: a vicious cycle with dangerous implications for our democracy.

Since the 2002 election cycle, CIRCLE has produced a stream of timely national and state statistics that became the basis for most press coverage of young voters. We have also conducted our own national polls, contracted researchers to conduct randomized field experiments, convened scholars and practitioners, and issued joint reports with Rock the Vote, Generational Alliance, and Young Voter Strategies.

“CIRCLE has been influential in generating interest on important issues and forced scholars to take account of disciplines besides those to which they belong. CIRCLE has clearly been a vehicle for intellectual broadening and awakening.”

—JAMES YOUNISS, RESEARCH
PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY,
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF
AMERICA

Turnout rose significantly in 2004 and 2008. Clearly, research was not the main cause of this change, but lines can be traced directly from our research work to the behavior of political leaders. A senior official on one national presidential campaign wrote after the 2004 election: “I literally would have been lost without CIRCLE on the campaign!!! You would laugh if you read any of my briefing memos or talking points—they are littered with CIRCLE research.” The person most responsible for Barack Obama’s successful outreach to young voters in Iowa (where youth turnout quadrupled in 2008) had collaborated with CIRCLE on nonpartisan efforts earlier in the decade. Meanwhile,



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we provided timely tailored research for nonpartisan education efforts.

AMERICA NEVER SOLVES ITS DEEPEST PROBLEMS WITHOUT ITS CITIZENS, AND THUS WE CANNOT MOVE FORWARD WITHOUT OUR NON-COLLEGE-BOUND YOUNG PEOPLE.

Finally, CIRCLE has worked to improve strategies and day-to-day practices in organizations that engage young people, mainly by replying to their requests for research and evidence. We have provided training and technical assistance to at least 340 organizations in the form of tailored research and statistics, presentations, advice on evaluation or strategy, research design, and collaboration in planning events.

OUR CURRENT FOCUS: NON-COLLEGE YOUTH

Ever since CIRCLE's launch, we have been concerned with disparities among young people. Focusing on the national trends in voting, volunteering, and other forms of civic engagement—whether they are rising or falling—can obscure enormous gaps among people of the same generation. For example, almost half of young adults (age 18-29) have no college experience. Compared to their college-educated peers, they are less than half as likely to vote and less than one third as likely to volunteer.

For Americans up to age 18, high schools provide an institutional structure for civic learning. After that age, the massive infrastructure of higher education (constituting almost 3 percent of GDP and subsidized by the government) is available for some and provides them with civic education. But people who do not pursue education past high school have very few opportunities for civic learning.

This situation has grown distinctly worse. We have tracked 10 forms of civic engagement from 1970 to the present: belonging to a group, attending religious services, belonging to a union, reading a newspaper, attending a meeting, working on a community project, being contacted by a political party, volunteering, voting, and trust in other people.³

"CIRCLE fact sheets and working papers are key resources for Kettering Foundation research on youth civic engagement. Moreover, CIRCLE's collaborative way of working and commitment to connecting different groups concerned about youth and civic life have been extremely useful to Kettering."

—DAVID MATHEWS AND
JOHN DEDRICK, KETTERING
FOUNDATION

With one exception, all of these forms of engagement have dropped substantially for all youth. (The one exception is volunteering, which has risen as more institutionalized volunteering programs have been created.) With no exceptions, these 10 forms of engagement are now much less common for non-college youth than for their college-educated peers.

As a result, non-college youth are basically missing from our groups, meetings, projects, and elections—in a way that was not true in 1970. Society misses their potential contributions; they lose opportunities to learn and form networks; and their issues are overlooked. Since research finds significant psychological and educational benefits from civic engagement, these young people are missing chances to develop personally in healthy ways.

Programs exist that engage working-class 18-to 29-year-olds in civic activities, supported by philanthropy and a few small federal initiatives. These programs (whose leaders CIRCLE has convened on several occasions) provide a base of experience and data. During the fall of 2011, CIRCLE is completing a major evaluation of YouthBuild USA and analyzing data from our own focus groups in Little Rock, Baltimore, Richmond, and Lowell (Metro Boston).

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We intend to continue studying working-class young adults both in and out of civic programs and developing recommendations based on their ideas and our research. America never solves its deepest problems without its citizens, and therefore we cannot move forward without our non-college-bound young people. ★

ENDNOTES

- 1 Lonnie Sherrod, Judith Torney-Purta, and Constance Flanagan, *Research on the Development of Citizenship: A Field Comes of Age* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010); Jonathan Tisch, Karl Weber and Mayor Corey Booker, *Citizen You: Doing Your Part to Change the World* (New York: Crown, 2010)
- 2 Richard G. Niemi and Jane Junn, *Civic Education: What Makes Students Learn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, p.16).
- 3 Constance Flanagan, Peter Levine, and Richard Settersten, *Civic Engagement and the Changing Transition to Adulthood*, CIRCLE monograph, 2009.

"CIRCLE has been an incredibly important force within the civic engagement movement. I have used CIRCLE's research to make the case for several of my organization's initiatives. In addition, CIRCLE helps add legitimacy to our work in the civic engagement movement. In particular, CIRCLE has helped us get the attention of law makers and major foundations as a 'canary in the mine shaft' of sorts. I am so grateful for CIRCLE's leadership in civic engagement!"

—CECILIA M. ORPHAN, DOCTORAL STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, FORMER NATIONAL MANAGER, AMERICAN DEMOCRACY PROJECT, AASCU

"CIRCLE is the go-to source for information on historic turnout data and analysis. We use your data to make the case for the need for youth engagement."

—MATT SINGER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BUS FEDERATION



CIRCLE: ILLUMINATING OUR DEMOCRACY

BY: THOMAS EHRLICH, THE STANFORD SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Nostalgia can be a troubling pastime, and never more than when we reflect back on the steady decline in the extent to which Americans participate in making our democracy work. Causes of the decline can be traced to various segments of our society, but higher education bears a major share of the blame.

I teach these days at Stanford University, so I'll use it as an example. Freshmen at Stanford in the late 1920s and 1930s were required to take a year-long course called "Problems of Citizenship." The course was one-fourth of the normal first-year undergraduate curriculum, and was rooted in the judgments of the University's founders, Jane and Leland Stanford, that education for civic responsibilities should be the primary goal of undergraduate education.

What a contrast is that course, and others like it, taught at colleges and universities around the country in the first half of the twentieth century, with most contemporary courses in political science today. In the post-World War II years, disinterested, disengaged analysis became the dominant mode of academic inquiry in the social sciences, and quantitative methods became the primary tools of that analysis. Students were no longer encouraged to become actively engaged in making democracy work. They were trained to be observers, not participants.

This perspective had a powerful effect not just on college students, but on the teaching of civics in secondary schools. A primary aim of high-school civics courses in the era before World War II had been to prepare young students to be involved in politics at every level. The new trend drained the civics courses of their activist aims. Learning about government was substituted for participating in it.

Fortunately, over recent decades, there has been renewed attention to the need in our democracy for citizens to be more than spectators. In the year 2000, Robert Putnam sounded an alarm in *Bowling Alone*. Some commentators quarreled with his conclusions, arguing that Americans were finding new ways to engage with civic purpose, but no one could dispute the downward slope of voting and other traditional measures of civic involvement.

What also became clear was the lack of reliable data on the civic involvement of Americans of all ages and especially young people, since unless youth engage in civic work there is little

likelihood that they will do so as they grow older. Further, there was little understanding of what are the most effective means to promote youth civic involvement.

SINCE THEN, CIRCLE HAS BECOME THE PREMIER SITE FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO UNDERSTAND HOW YOUNG CITIZENS ENGAGE WITH OUR DEMOCRACY.

Fortunately, just a year after *Bowling Alone* was published, CIRCLE was born with a mandate both to promote sound research on youth civic involvement and to publicize means to enhance that involvement. Since then, CIRCLE has become the premier site for those who want to understand how young citizens engage with our democracy. Under the superb leadership of Peter Levine, CIRCLE has provided deep learning about what works and why. In study after study, CIRCLE has provided wisdom on issues relating to civic engagement as well as current data on youth participation in a broad range of civic activities.

"[CIRCLE] is THE go to resource for reliable information and keeps the field grounded."

—LIZ HOLLANDER, SENIOR FELLOW,
TUFTS UNIVERSITY, JONATHAN M.
TISCH COLLEGE OF CITIZENSHIP AND
PUBLIC SERVICE.

CIRCLE was given a particularly fertile home at Tufts' Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service. That College is among the country's leaders in civic education, and CIRCLE nicely complements the educational mission of the College with a strong research component. Recent years have seen significant changes in youth civic involvement, driven in significant part by technology, and CIRCLE is helping us understand these shifts.

I applaud CIRCLE for a decade of outstanding work and look forward to continued CIRCLE leadership in the decades to come. ★



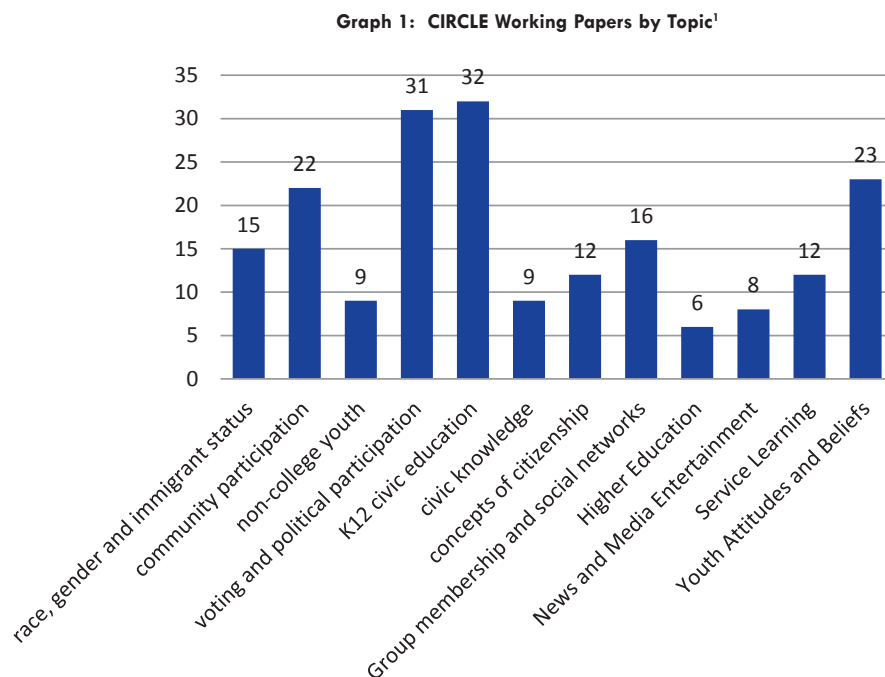
CIRCLE BY THE NUMBERS

CIRCLE's mission is to sponsor, conduct, and disseminate rigorous, non-partisan information and research on the civic life of young people in the United States, to aid in the increase of their participation, to create a more democratic society, and to do so in a manner that serves the needs of scholars, practitioners, public officials, and the press. Our goal has always been to become the premiere source of information and research on young people's civic life, the first place to which the public turns. The following section presents graphs and a timeline showing how CIRCLE has worked to achieve our goal.

CIRCLE'S MISSION IS TO SPONSOR, CONDUCT, AND DISSEMINATE RIGOROUS, NON-PARTISAN INFORMATION AND RESEARCH ON THE CIVIC LIFE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES, TO AID IN THE INCREASE OF THEIR PARTICIPATION, TO CREATE A MORE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY, AND TO DO SO IN A MANNER THAT SERVES THE NEEDS OF SCHOLARS, PRACTITIONERS, PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND THE PRESS.

SPONSORED RESEARCH

Through generous grants from The Pew Charitable Trusts and Carnegie Corporation of New York, from 2001-2006, CIRCLE was able to re-grant **3.6 million dollars to more than 100 teams** to conduct research on youth civic engagement. These grants have resulted in more than **70 working papers, six major reports, nine books, and several articles** published in research journals. Moreover, by supporting at least **14 Ph.D. candidates** and several junior faculty members, these grants helped to build a new cadre of researchers studying the topic of youth civic engagement. Graph 1 shows the research topics covered in our working paper series.



¹ Some working papers could be classified under multiple topic areas such as "voting" and "non-college youth." Therefore, the numbers in Graph 2 add up to a total greater than 73 (the total number of working papers we have published).



BY THE NUMBERS

WHILE CIRCLE HAS EVOLVED OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS, OUR MISSION HAS REMAINED THE SAME: TO SPONSOR, CONDUCT, AND DISSEMINATE RIGOROUS, NON-PARTISAN INFORMATION AND RESEARCH ON THE CIVIC LIFE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES. FOLLOWING IS A TIMELINE WITH EXAMPLES OF HOW WE HAVE FULFILLED OUR MISSION OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS.



2001
The University of Maryland receives a **multi-million dollar** grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to start CIRCLE.

2003
Carnegie Corporation of New York and CIRCLE issue a major report on the state of K-12 civic education, the **Civic Mission of Schools.**

2003
CIRCLE releases its **first working paper** entitled "Easier Voting Methods Boost Youth Turnout" by Mary Fitzgerald, Ph.D. Candidate.

2004
CIRCLE produces **first ever day-after estimate** of youth voter turnout in Iowa Caucus. CIRCLE continues to produce these estimates today.

2005
CIRCLE reaches **200 consultations** with practitioners. Additionally, CIRCLE records over **120** presentations.

2001
William Galston is named Director; Peter Levine, Deputy Director; and Mark Hugo Lopez, Research Director.

2002
CIRCLE Releases its **first fact sheet** entitled "Youth Voter Turnout Declined by Any Measure."

2003
Over \$2.2 million dollars re-granted by CIRCLE to 46 research teams to conduct studies on youth civic engagement. Average grants are **\$50,000**. Seven grants are given to Ph.D. candidates.

2003
Carnegie Corporation of New York awards a **half million dollar grant** to CIRCLE to expand the research portfolio to include research on K-12 civic education.

Cited by: *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *CBS Radio News*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *USA Today*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *National Journal*, *CNN.com*, and many others

2004
CIRCLE establishes itself as timely and reliable source for reports on young voters in more than **500** media stores.

2005
CIRCLE releases 21st fact sheet "**Electoral Engagement Among Non-College Attending Youth.**"

This fact sheet represents the beginning of CIRCLE's commitment to understanding the civic engagement patterns of young people who are not on track to attend college.



2006

CIRCLE Director Peter Levine speaks with Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and others at the launch of the National Advisory Council of the Campaign for Civic Mission of Schools.

The event, held at the National Press Club, in Washington, is televised by C-SPAN and covered in a nationally syndicated column by David Broder.

2008

CIRCLE is listed in **1,253** news stories including media outlets such as **NPR, PBS, MTV and Fox News.**

2008

CIRCLE moves from the University of Maryland to become part of **Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service.**

2009

A panel at the conclusion of the annual Civic Studies Institute at Tisch College on "The Obama Administration's Civic Agenda After Six Months" is **broadcast nationally by C-SPAN.**

2010

CIRCLE organizes a conference on **"Federal Policy and Civic Skills"** at the National Press Club in Washington, DC.

2011

In Chicago, the Aspen Institute and Knight Foundation release a commissioned paper on Civic Engagement and Community Information by Peter Levine.

2006

CIRCLE re-grants over half a million dollars to **10** research teams to conduct studies on K-12 Civic Education.

2006

Peter Levine becomes Executive Director of CIRCLE, succeeding William Galston.

2006

CIRCLE analyzes the data for the National Conference on Citizenship for the **first-ever Civic Health Index**, which has tracked 40 civic indicators since the 1970's.

2008

CIRCLE receives a federal grant from the Corporation for National & Community Service to pilot and assess an online social network to study civic participation.

2009

CIRCLE Director Peter Levine and James Youniss publish *"Engaging Young People in Civic Life."* This book documents a series of successful civic education programs and policies, and serves as a manual on how to best create opportunities for civic engagement among young Americans.

2011

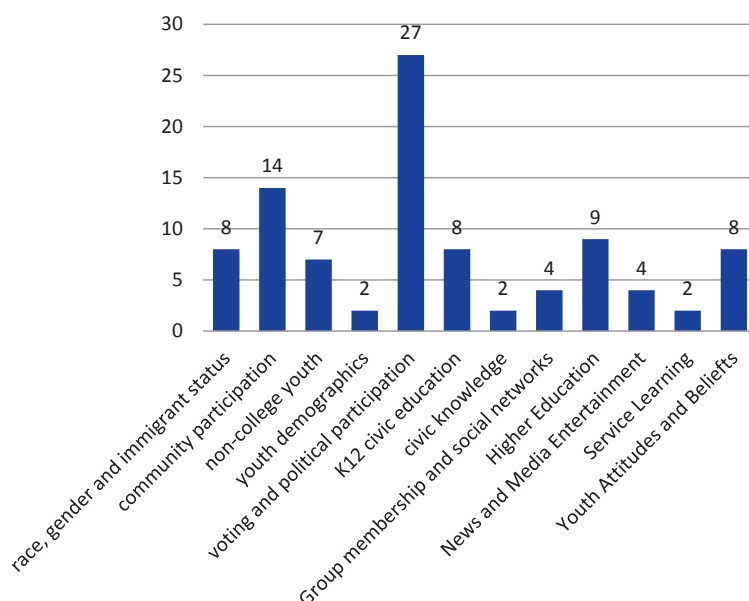
Google Scholar™ a search engine (restricted to scholarly publications) finds **41,800** publications that cite CIRCLE by its full name.



CONDUCT RESEARCH

Over the past ten years, we have published at least 70 fact sheets. Additionally, we authored or co-authored more than ten major reports including the *Civic Mission of Schools* report.

Graph 2: CIRCLE Fact Sheets by Topic²



² Some fact sheets could be classified under multiple topic areas. Therefore, the numbers in Graph 2 add up to a total greater than 70 (the total number of fact sheets we have published).

DISSEMINATE

CIRCLE is committed to making research findings easily accessible to a wide audience. Every piece of research we produce is available for free via our Web site. **We have worked directly with more than 350 organizations providing answers to research queries and customized data analysis.** We have regularly presented at meetings and conferences, reaching many different constituencies. In addition, we have taken a more active role in reviewing materials and strategic plans for practitioner organizations and/or served on their advisory or governing boards.



THE YOUTH MOVEMENT'S ROLE IN CIVIC REVITALIZATION

BY: NICHOLAS V. LONGO, PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

I have come to realize that I have a lot in common with my Millennial students having come of age during the 1990s, witnessing a complete breakdown of public life with vitriolic partisan fights, threats of government shutdowns, and an overall failure of leadership from our nation's political class. And yet I am inspired by the way so many in the next generation are responding to our ongoing democracy deficit. Rather than becoming apathetic, young people are creating a new type of public life—one that is more relational, collaborative, open, and results-oriented.

But the new civic politics that is emerging among our youth is not simply the result of a uniquely prescient group of young people rejecting the dominant public culture. This generation also has the benefit of a host of institutions promoting this different kind of politics, a civic ecology that includes a global network of community-based organizations, civic professionals, democratic educators, and centers on college campuses.

RATHER THAN BECOMING APATHETIC, YOUNG PEOPLE ARE CREATING A NEW TYPE OF PUBLIC LIFE—ONE THAT IS MORE RELATIONAL, COLLABORATIVE, OPEN, AND RESULTS-ORIENTED.

And for the past decade, CIRCLE has been conducting groundbreaking research on the political and civic engagement of young people, becoming one of the touchstones of these efforts to build a youth movement around civic revitalization. Thus, it seems fair to say that if it takes a village to educate active citizens, by using big ideas and cutting edge research, technology and old-fashioned face-to-face relationships, CIRCLE has become an indispensable part of the civic community.

I can see the value of their contributions in my own work: I have used CIRCLE's research to inform countless projects. From research on educating young people for democracy, to my own practice engaging my college student colleagues, CIRCLE's visionary staff and deep networks provide ongoing guidance and wise counsel.

This hub of civic life also played a central role in my professional development, as supporting a cadre of young scholars has been part of their mission from the beginning. When I was a graduate student, I was lucky enough to receive funding

from CIRCLE that allowed me to finish my dissertation on civic education, for which I am forever grateful because I'm not sure how it would have gotten finished otherwise (and it certainly would have been a much weaker project). Just as important, I got intellectual support and encouragement, along with concrete suggestions, from Peter Levine and the other staff at CIRCLE, which I know they continually provide to other young academics, including through their annual summer institute for civic studies.

As a result of these efforts, there is a new generation of public scholars who aspire to do the kind of engaged research that makes CIRCLE so relevant and timely: to ask good questions, listen, think creatively, and then ultimately, act for a better world.

I have learned that this approach is part of a much longer democratic tradition. The idea of connecting research with the practice of democracy, for instance, emerged out of the settlement house movement led by Jane Addams and then a series of civic experiments such as social centers, learning circles, and citizenship schools over the past century. With this tradition of democracy in mind, John Dewey remarked at the fortieth anniversary of Hull House: "In these days of criticism of democracy as a political institution, [the founders of the settlement house movement] ha[ve] reminded us that democracy is not a form but a way of living together and working together." These same words could easily be said of the work CIRCLE has done over the past decade.

But as the recent debt crisis in Washington, DC has reminded us, CIRCLE is pursuing this alternative conception of democracy in very challenging times. We simply can't afford another generation to witness the continuous meltdown of our commonwealth. Thus, I can think of no better way to celebrate this important milestone than by genuinely listening to the voices of our youngest community members, as CIRCLE does so well. We should use this occasion to audaciously imagine how the new civic politics of so many of our youth can become the dominant politics of the future—and working together to make it happen. ★



ROCKING THE NUMBERS: CIRCLE'S PLACE IN THE YOUTH VOTING MOVEMENT

BY: HEATHER SMITH, PRESIDENT OF ROCK THE VOTE

Over the past decade, CIRCLE has been an incredibly valuable part of the youth voting community, providing trusted, high-quality data and analysis on youth voting and civic participation overall.

CIRCLE has helped many youth organizations to use data and research to understand their audience and to tell the story of young people's engagement in a compelling way. Its research has academic rigor, but it also has real world implications; it answers questions that are on the minds of those of us working in the youth civic engagement field, improving our work in ways that cannot be overstated.

In 2008, more young people cast a ballot than in any other previous US election, and the headlines read: "The Year of the Youth Vote." Barack Obama received credit for this surge in young voters, which he deserved, as he took the chance and invested significant time and resources in reaching out to and engaging young people in meaningful ways. But there was more at play in 2008 – for nearly a decade, youth organizations had been testing voter contact tactics, developing coordinated messages, sharing best practices and building a model to increase young voter participation.

The 2008 elections were the third major election cycle in a row when young voter turnout went up, in part because there was a new, engaged generation entering the electorate, there were candidates paying attention to their issues and asking for their votes, and there were organizations working together to understand this generation and how to best engage them.

CIRCLE's work, both analyzing and quantifying the levels of civic participation of young people and identifying opportunities for improvement, made these efforts by the youth organizations possible.

"CIRCLE is an invaluable resource for 'the facts' on youth civic engagement. I regularly point students and reporters to the CIRCLE website for information on civic activity among young people. I would also say that the research sponsored and publicized by CIRCLE is invaluable."

—DAVID CAMPBELL, JOHN CARDINAL O'HARA, CSC
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, DIRECTOR, ROONEY CENTER FOR AMERICAN DEMOCRACY, UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

"CIRCLE is the most trusted, relied on and authoritative source in the field."

—TED MCCONNELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCHOOLS

And the work of CIRCLE continues to push us all forward. CIRCLE's insight into the shifting demographics of the Millennial generation, which young people are participating, and who is being left behind helps us all to be more effective. Programs that reach the most disengaged communities have been furthered or developed in response to their research. And efforts to remove the barriers to participation - especially the lack of quality civic education in high schools and the constraints that outdated election processes have on access and turnout - have been strengthened by the research CIRCLE has done to identify these barriers and the impact of potential solutions.

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And while CIRCLE is a resource on civic engagement broadly, it is during big election cycles that my organization, Rock the Vote, works most closely with them. As we head into the 2012 election cycle, I already have all of the CIRCLE voter turnout papers and fact sheets taped to my wall for easy reference, I have their phone number on speed dial for questions related to Census figures or other data analysis needed for media interviews and presentations, and I look forward to CIRCLE's input on new, measurable ideas to further civic engagement that we will test in the coming year.

CIRCLE'S INSIGHT INTO THE SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION, WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PARTICIPATING, AND WHO IS BEING LEFT BEHIND HELPS US ALL TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE.

As I look ahead to the work that will be done to further the engagement of young Americans in our communities and our democracy, I know it will be more meaningful because CIRCLE will be involved. So, thank you to everyone at CIRCLE for your work, congratulations on your tenth anniversary, and I look forward to what the next decade will bring. ★

"CIRCLE is the first place I look when looking for information on youth civic engagement. Your leadership has helped the youth field (and media) understand our constituency better and focus our work."

—DAVID B. SMITH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP

"CIRCLE is the go-to place for anyone (teachers, practitioners, journalists, scholars, citizens) interested in the most current and accurate information about young people and civic engagement. Organized, accurate, timely. Widely recognized and respected."

—CONSTANCE FLANAGAN, PROFESSOR, U. OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



BY THE PEOPLE

The current CIRCLE staff would like to thank all the people who have contributed to making our organization successful over the past ten years. The people listed below played vital roles in CIRCLE's ability to produce timely and relevant research. **We would especially like to thank Bill Galston, our first director, who worked tirelessly to develop the mission of our organization and continues to serve as key advisor and champion of our work. We also thank deans Robert Hollister and Nancy Wilson and their colleagues, who created space for our work within the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University.**

CURRENT CIRCLE STAFF
AND
ADVISORY BOARD

STAFF

Peter Levine,
Director

Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg,
Lead Researcher

Abby Kiesa,
Youth Coordinator &
Researcher

Emily Hoban Kirby,
Senior Researcher

Surbhi Godsay,
Researcher

Kathy O'Connor,
Staff Assistant

Shawn Ginwright,
Cesar Chavez Institute for
Public Policy at San Francisco
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Diana Hess,
The Spencer Foundation

Deb Jospin,
sagawa/jospin consulting
firm (ex officio, as chair of
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Mills College

Richard M. Lerner,
Tufts University

Meira Levinson,
Harvard Graduate School of
Education

Susan Ostrander,
Tufts University

Kent Portney,
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Dorothy Stoneman,
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Lauren Young,
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The League of Young Voters

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Annenberg School,
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Tom Ehrlich,
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Maya Enista,
Mobilize.org

Constance Flanagan,
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William A. Galston,
Brookings Institution

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AND GRADUATE
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Melissa Kovacs
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Brent Elrod
Joshua Gillerman
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Billy Grayson
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Amber Simco
Krista Schmitt
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Allison Swartz
Josh Tobias
Jingcong Zhao



CIRCLE PAST STAFF AND PAST ADVISORY BOARD

PAST STAFF

William A. Galston,
Director (2001-2006)
Board Member
(2006-Present)

Deborah Both,
Senior Advisor
(2001-2008)

Demetria Sapienza,
Administrative Assistant
(2001-2005)

Dionne Williams,
Program Assistant
(2005-2008)

Barbara Cronin,
Business Manager
(2001-2008)

Carrie Donovan,
Youth Coordinator
(2002-2004)

Mark H. Lopez,
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(2001-2008)

Karlos Barrios Marcelo,
Research Assistant
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PAST ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

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Duke University

Jaime Ernesto Uzeta,
Strategic Partnerships &
Public Affairs,
MTV: Music Television

Wendy Wheeler,
Innovation Center
for Community &
Youth Development

"CIRCLE is extremely effective—the organization is operating broadly (and by that, I mean you are not in a silo), across many communities in the big and diverse civic engagement field, and with total and complete integrity."

—DIANA HESS, THE
SPENCER FOUNDATION

"I anticipate that when New Hampshire brings real civic education and engagement to all NH public schools, it will be, in large part, because of the guidance of CIRCLE and that CIRCLE will have been highly effective in making civic engagement a reality for NH youth."

—MARY SUSAN LEAHY,
PRESIDENT OF THE NEW
HAMPSHIRE SUPREME
COURT SOCIETY AND
THE FACILITATOR OF
THE SOCIETY'S CIVIC
EDUCATION TASK FORCE



CIRCLE would also like to thank several foundations and their program officers for their support over the years.

Tobi Walker and Michael Delli Carpini of The Pew Charitable Trusts and Cynthia Gibson and Geraldine Mannion of Carnegie Corporation of New York provided invaluable guidance to CIRCLE and helped us to find our place in the field of civic engagement.

David Mathews, John Dedrick, and Ileana Marin of the Kettering Foundation were partners in qualitative work that has led to a better understanding of the political views of both college and non-college young people.

Our partnerships with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the National Conference on Citizenship (NCOC) helped to create stable measures of the country's civic health over the past six years.

In addition, we are grateful for financial support from the following foundations and organizations: Abt Associates, Beldon Foundation, Bonner Foundation, Bringing Theory to Practice, Civic Enterprises, Cricket Island Foundation, Ford Foundation, JEHT Foundation, Kellogg Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Massachusetts Department of Education, New America Foundation, Next Generation Learning Challenges, Omidyar Network, Spencer Foundation, Solidago Fund, Taking it Global, The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, Tides Foundation, the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, and the United States Department of Education.



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