

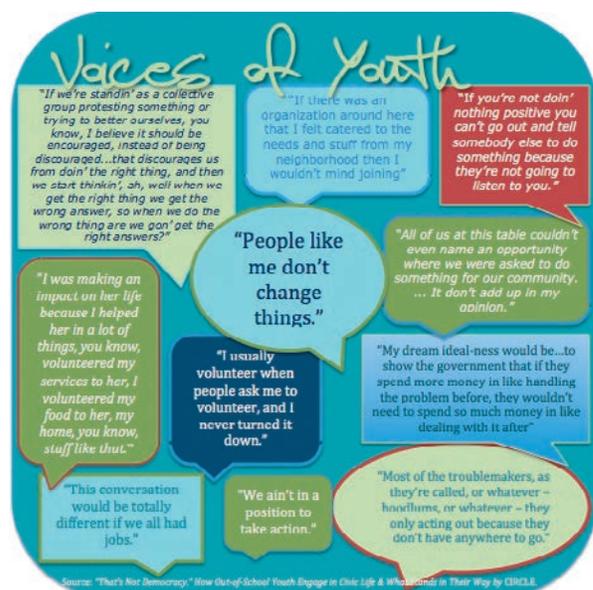
HOW DO OUT OF SCHOOL YOUTH ENGAGE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES AND WHAT STANDS IN THEIR WAY?

National survey data show that the majority of Americans who are 18-to-29 years old and without college experience are basically disengaged from traditional civic life. They are engaging in ways not captured by surveys, but significant barriers to engagement stand in their way. These are among the findings of a new CIRCLE report entitled, "That's Not Democracy: How Out-of-School Youth Engage in Civic Life and What Stands in Their Way" (Released in August 2012).

CIRCLE conducted semi-structured conversations with non-college youth to explore why they do or do not participate, and to identify forms of action and engagement that surveys may not capture. In total, we interviewed 121 non-college youth in 20 focus groups in 4 cities between the fall of 2008 and June 2010. We concentrated our focus groups in urban areas, and participants were relatively likely to be African American compared to the national population of non-college youth.

YOUTH HAVE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE, BUT LACK OPPORTUNITIES

Participants were highly aware and concerned about social and political issues. They were likely to say that they discussed these issues critically in their own social networks, but could not think of times when they had been asked to take action. They mentioned issues like gang violence, the safety of their children, neighborhood blight and homelessness in their communities.



IN THIS ISSUE

1. How Do Out of School Youth Engage in Their Communities and What Stands in Their Way?

RESEARCH ROUNDUP

4. The Economic Benefits of Civic Engagement
6. Election 2012: Information Needs of Young Americans, 18-29
8. Get the #YouthTruth on Young Voters
9. State Civic Education Standards and Requirements

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

10. Is There a Role for Higher Education in Reducing the Gap in Youth Civic Participation?

Tufts
UNIVERSITY

Jonathan M. Tisch
College of Citizenship
and Public Service

OCTOBER 2012

Continued on Page 2

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.

Continued from Page 1

Civic skills are necessary tools to engage effectively in the community. When asked to identify their own skills for making positive changes in their communities, participants most frequently cited communication skills (such as being able to offer a persuasive argument or listen well). Most often, they were unable to connect such skills with actual opportunities to participate. Yet if young people who had been recruited and asked to participate, they often agreed.

THEY WERE LIKELY TO SAY THAT THEY DISCUSS THESE ISSUES CRITICALLY IN THEIR OWN SOCIAL NETWORKS, BUT COULD NOT THINK OF TIMES WHEN THEY HAD BEEN ASKED TO TAKE ACTION.

Faced with a lack of opportunity, participants cited other ways that they were able to contribute to their communities. They were engaged in various “helping” behaviors, like providing food or shelter to strangers or family. More often, though, participants cited being role models for youth in their neighborhoods as the main way they contributed. Many did not think of these forms of helping when asked about community-level change.

MOST FELT THERE WERE CONCRETE BARRIERS TO THEIR ENGAGEMENT

Participants cited many barriers that prevented their participation in communities. For example, many felt that institutions did not want their engagement and said they had few positive role models in their communities who had asked them to get involved. Many felt they lacked the money and connections to contribute.

MANY FACED GANG-RELATED ISSUES AND POLICE HARASSMENT; THEY DOUBTED THEIR COMMUNITIES COULD CHANGE, OR THAT THEIR VOICES WOULD BE HEARD.

Several of the participants described their neighborhood’s issues as being daunting and deterring them from engagement. Many faced gang-related issues and police harassment; they doubted their communities could change, or that their voices would be heard.

Continued on Page 3

CIRCLE STAFF AND ADVISORY BOARD

STAFF

Peter Levine,
Director

Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg,
Lead Researcher

Abby Kiesa,
Youth Coordinator &
Researcher

Felicia Sullivan,
Senior Researcher

Surbhi Godsay,
Researcher

Kathy O’Connor,
Staff Assistant

Emily Hoban Kirby,
Consultant

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Biko Baker,
The League of Young
Voters

Michael X. Delli Carpini,
Annenberg School,
University of Pennsylvania

Thomas Ehrlich,
Stanford University

Maya Enista,
Mobilize.org

Constance Flanagan,
University of Wisconsin

William A. Galston,
Brookings Institution

Shawn Ginwright,
University of California
San Francisco

Diana Hess,
Spencer Foundation

Deb Jospin,
sagawa/jospin consulting
firm (ex officio, as chair of
Tisch Board of
Advocates)

Joseph Kahne,
Mills College

Richard M. Lerner,
Tufts University

Meira Levinson,
Harvard Graduate School
of Education

Susan Ostrander,
Tufts University

Kent Portney,
Tufts University

Carmen Sirianni,
Brandeis University

Dorothy Stoneman,
YouthBuild USA

Lauren Young,
LJYoung Consulting

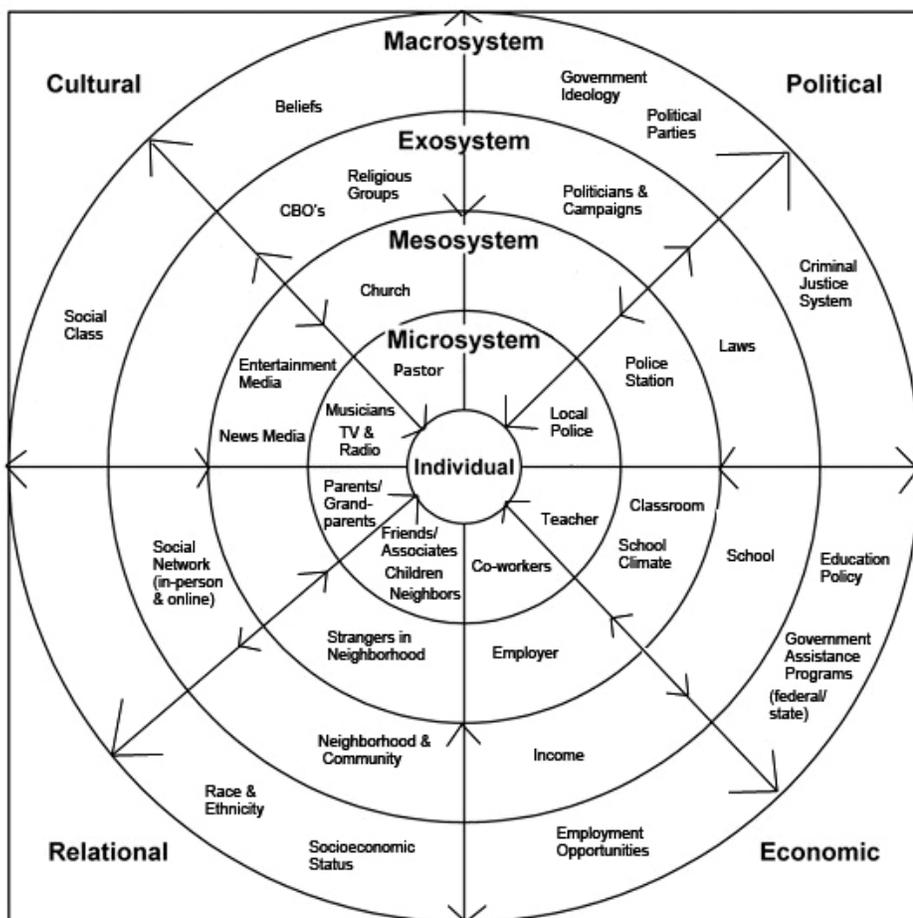


CIVIC INFLUENCES COME FROM MANY PLACES

Based on CIRCLE’s focus groups and a scan of previous literature, we explored what settings or contexts help out-of-school youth to develop civic skills and motivations as they move through young adulthood. Contexts included families and households, ethnic or cultural groups, neighborhoods, schools, government agencies, and workplaces, among others. For the most part, respondents were critical of the ways that these settings had engaged them or developed their skills.

Find the full report here: <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=4240> ★

Figure 1: The Contexts of Youth Development



Adapted from "An Illustration of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecosystemic model," by D. Fromme, 2011, *Ecosystemic Issues and Approaches. Systems of Psychotherapy* (401-427) (New York: Springer).

THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

On September 14, in Philadelphia, the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) released its report entitled “Civic Health and Unemployment II: The Case Builds” (2012), which was written by CIRCLE Lead Researcher Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, University of Wisconsin Professor Chaeyoon Lim, and CIRCLE Director Peter Levine.

At the release, Wendy Spencer, the CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service, said:

I just had an epiphany listening to Kei talk, while I was sitting there, about what I would like to do if I had a magic wand. I would take this report, tonight, and send out couriers to read it aloud to every mayor in America, aloud for emphasis. Because if I am I mayor, and I am looking at this, I'm thinking: OK, this actually is going to help my community strengthen.

Jonathan Greenblatt, Director of the White House Office on Social Innovation and Civic Participation, said that the White House was impressed with the research, which reveals that “the civic health of communities is a core element of our economic wellbeing. And it is a long process, but that process begins with a first step. Today almost represents the first walk down that path. ... I really look forward, on behalf of the President ... to walking that path.”

THE BASIC PATTERN FOUND IN THE 2011 REPORT HELD UP: COMMUNITIES WITH MORE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN 2006 SUFFERED LESS FROM UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE GREAT RECESSION, EVEN WHEN OTHER POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS ARE FACTORED IN.

In 2011, CIRCLE had released a report entitled *Civic Health and Unemployment: Can Engagement Strengthen the Economy?* in partnership with the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), Civic Enterprises, the Saguaro Seminar at Harvard University, and the National Constitution Center. In that report, we found that states and large metropolitan areas with high levels of civic engagement prior to the Great Recession suffered less unemployment between 2006 and 2010.

The relationship between civic health and economic resilience held even when we adjusted for the economic factors that are usually thought to influence unemployment, such as demographics and changes in housing prices. To be sure, civic engagement is not the only factor that matters. Las Vegas lost jobs because of the collapse of the housing market; Detroit, because of changes in the auto market. But, given two states with similar economic conditions, the one with more civic engagement would weather the recession better.

Since 2011, in partnership with the NCoC, and with support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, CIRCLE has continued to investigate this topic. For the new report released in September, we investigated the relationship between civic health and unemployment in all 50 states, 942 metro areas, and more than 3,100 counties. We added new statistical controls (alternative explanations of unemployment change) to the model, analyzed a Census Current Population survey that follows individuals over time, and incorporated the results of the Knight Foundation's Soul of the Community Survey, which investigated a wider range of opinions and attitudes than are measured in federal surveys.

The basic pattern found in the 2011 report held up: communities with more civic engagement in 2006 suffered less from unemployment in the Great Recession, even when other possible explanations are factored in.

The new analysis also directed attention to two particular aspects of civic engagement: the role of nonprofit organizations and the effects of social cohesion.

Nonprofits play important economic roles in communities:

- The counties with the most nonprofits lost fewer jobs than the counties with the least. Counties that ranked in the top 10 percent for nonprofits per capita in 2006 experienced an increase of two percentage points in their unemployment rates between 2006 and 2009, compared to an increase of 5.1 percentage points for counties in the bottom 10 percent during the same period.
- If a county had one extra nonprofit for every 1,000 residents in 2005, and everything else were held constant, it would have

Continued on Page 5



Continued from Page 4

half a percentage point less unemployment by 2009.

- An employed individual in 2008 was twice as likely to become unemployed if he or she lived in a community with few nonprofit organizations (the bottom five percent in nonprofit density) rather than one with in the top five percent for nonprofit density, even if the two communities were otherwise similar.

A closer look revealed that not all nonprofits mattered equally. The ones that provided concrete opportunities to local members or clients had the biggest impact on employment rates. For example, fraternal organizations and unions that convene their members for local meetings, sports organizations that hold athletics events, and service-providers that directly assist local people all seemed to help, whereas “mailing-list” organizations whose members just contribute checks did not seem to matter for unemployment.

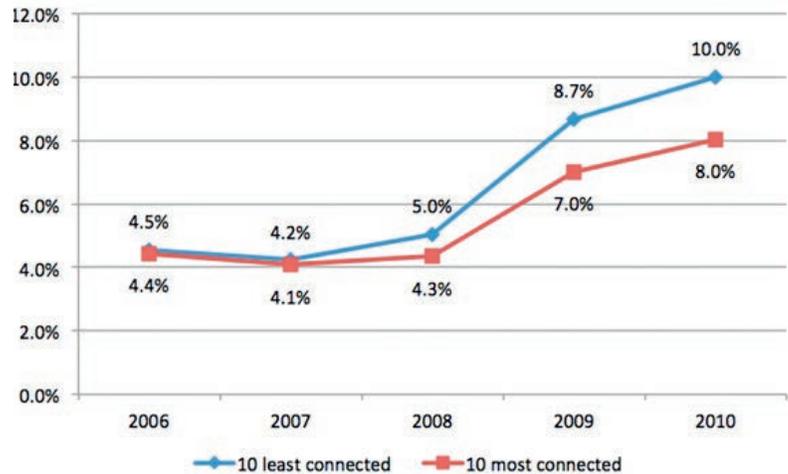
The second aspect of civic engagement that affects employment is “social cohesion.” We analyzed several surveys for this project, each with somewhat different measures. Thus the precise components of social cohesion varied, but the general definition was the degree to which residents socialize, communicate, and collaborate with one another. Some examples of the impact of social cohesion:

- At the state level, stronger social cohesion within a community strongly predicted a smaller increase in the unemployment rate from 2006-2010.

- In 2006, the states with the highest social cohesion and those with the lowest had virtually identical unemployment rates of around 4.5 percent. But by 2010, their unemployment rates were significantly different: states with high social cohesion had an unemployment rate of 8 percent and states with low social cohesion had an unemployment rate of 10 percent.

Social cohesion and nonprofit density each independently mattered for unemployment. Changing either the number of nonprofits that serve and work with citizens, or the degree to which people interact, would benefit a community’s economic resilience.

Unemployment Rate 2006-2010 for Most and Least Connected States



The statistical models used in this analysis cannot completely explain why these patterns exist, but the Knight Foundation’s Soul of the Community provides suggestive evidence. It measures subjective factors, such as people’s feelings about their own communities. By combining Knight survey data with federal data, we find that nonprofit density and social cohesion both predict people’s pride in, and attachment to, the places they live. In turn, pride and attachment strongly predict positive perceptions of the local economy. Given the links we found between nonprofit density and social cohesion (on one hand) and employment (on the other), we hypothesize that when residents are proud of their communities, they are more likely to promote local businesses and local initiatives. As a result, local business owners prosper and entrepreneurial activities flourish.

For example, businesses and investors have three choices during a recession: (1) keep their own capital and productive assets (such as factories) on the sidelines until economic conditions improve; (2) invest anywhere in the world where the returns seem most promising; or (3) invest in job-creating enterprises near where they live. They may be most likely to choose the last option if they are optimistic about local opportunities, if they are connected to and trust local people, and if they care about where they live. They may assess local opportunities more optimistically, or simply decide to invest locally even if they anticipate somewhat lower returns.

Continued on Page 12



ELECTION 2012: INFORMATION NEEDS OF YOUNG AMERICANS 18-29

INSIGHTS FROM THE JULY 2012 CIRCLE/YOUTH ENGAGEMENT FUND POLL

A poll conducted by CIRCLE for the Youth Engagement Fund found high levels of uncertainty among young adults about key issues and the voting process itself. A nationally representative sample of 18-to-29 year olds answered a range of questions about the November 2012 federal election, key public issues, the presidential candidates, and their own motivations to vote. A little over one third (36.8%) of respondents were 18-to-21 years old and will have their first opportunity to vote this year in a federal election. A large number, 42.8%, have no college experience, a group highlighted in our new report "That's NOT Democracy."

even though health care costs were ranked as the third most important issue in the poll. Twenty-eight percent did not know what they thought would be a successful approach to improving the U.S. economy and creating jobs, even though jobs and the economy were ranked as the most important issue by 33% of respondents. Thirty-five percent did not know whether they opposed or supported the "Buffet Rule," which would establish a minimum tax of 30% for people making \$1 million or more.

Respondents were less unsure about social policy. Only 22.9% didn't know whether they supported or opposed the Arizona law that required police to verify the legal status of someone they had stopped or arrested. Slightly more, 25.7%, did not know whether they supported a pathway for children of illegal immigrants to gain legal-resident status by joining the military or attending college. Nineteen percent did not know whether they supported or opposed laws recognizing same-sex marriage.

The poll did not delve into the deeper reasons behind these "don't know" responses, but it would seem that young people need better opportunities to learn about and discuss public policies.

YOUNG PEOPLE MISINFORMED ABOUT VOTING LAWS

Comparing what respondents thought were their state voting laws to the actual laws, we found that 68% of young people were either unable or unwilling to answer — or were incorrect about, — whether their state required a government-issued photo ID to vote. Eighty percent were unable to answer or were incorrect about their state's early registration rules. Thirty-two percent of the non-registered young adults thought their state allowed them to register less than 30 days before the election, when it actually required them to do so at least 30 days prior. If they become interested in voting during the final phase of the 2012 campaign, it will be too late for them to register.

Anyone who works to get out the youth vote may have to raise awareness of the voting registration and poll-access rules in their areas.



MANY UNSURE OF KEY PUBLIC ISSUES

Although many respondents in the survey indicated strong views on current fiscal and social policy issues, a substantial portion of 18-to-29 year olds simply did not know where they stood on those issues. Forty-one percent did not know whether they supported or opposed the national health care reform law,

Continued on Page 7



COMPARING WHAT RESPONDENTS THOUGHT WERE THEIR STATE VOTING LAWS TO THE ACTUAL LAWS, WE FOUND THAT 68% OF YOUNG PEOPLE WERE EITHER UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO ANSWER — OR WERE INCORRECT ABOUT — WHETHER THEIR STATE REQUIRED A GOVERNMENT-ISSUED PHOTO ID TO VOTE.

CONNECTING WITH YOUNG VOTERS

It is often thought that social media, the Internet, and advertising campaigns are the best ways to reach young people. Although more than 90% of respondents had household access to the Internet, and two-thirds said they had smart phones, when asked about Facebook, only 21.6% said it might or would influence their voting, just slightly higher than the 20.4% who said celebrity endorsements might or would influence their votes.

Those looking to reach young voters would do well to work with the “microsystems” — friends, families, and organizational contacts—that are part of the lives of young people. In fact, 48.5% of respondents said they might or would be influenced to vote if their parents asked them to. Forty-five percent said they might or would be influenced to vote if their friends asked them “in person,” and 36.5% said they might or would be influenced to vote if an organization they belonged to asked them to vote. These personally meaningful connections are the strongest ways to reach young eligible voters.

THOSE LOOKING TO REACH YOUNG VOTERS WOULD DO WELL TO WORK WITH THE “MICROSYSTEMS” — FRIENDS, FAMILIES, AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONTACTS—THAT ARE PART OF THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

Respondents reported low levels of engagement with organized groups. More than three fifths (60.5%) indicated that

they did not belong to any group or organization. Of those who were involved with a group, the highest percentages (18.9%) said they belonged to a hobby group, sports team, or youth group. Fifteen percent said they belonged to a school club or association, and 11.4% said they belonged to a religious group.

GETTING YOUNG VOTERS INVOLVED IN CAMPAIGNS

For those running campaigns, it might be helpful to know that 32.7% of respondents said they might or would display a sticker on a car or a sign on their door or another location. Thirty-two percent indicated that they might or would spread a campaign message to friends and family. Downloading ringtones and donating small amounts of money via a cell phone were the least popular strategies, with only 12.4% and 14.1% of respondents indicating that they might or would engage in these activities.

Read more and get the basic findings here: <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=3951> ★



GET THE #YOUTHTRUTH ON YOUNG VOTERS

CIRCLE recently launched #YouthTruth, an education campaign to address a set of myths about young people.

As part of the campaign CIRCLE will provide:

- Stakeholders with the research and resources they need to tell an accurate story about youth political participation in Election 2012.
- Accurate, timely, and contextualized research and data to improve public conversations about youth and politics.

- Visuals that explain research on youth participation in an accessible way

- Simple summaries of youth voting in various forms for use in classes, trainings, and online

- Quick responses to data questions.

Follow @CivicYouth and #YouthTruth on Twitter, and contribute your own thoughts to the conversation. ★

THE #YOUTHTRUTH: CONFRONTING MYTHS ABOUT YOUNG VOTERS**MYTH: YOUNG PEOPLE ARE APATHETIC OR ALIENATED**

Young people care about issues, but in many cases are not asked to participate. Our recent national study entitled "That's Not Democracy: How Out-of-School Youth Engage in Civic Life and What Stands in Their Way" (see this issue, p. 1) finds that even the population least likely to vote, young adults without college experience, talk frequently about social and political issues, but they perceive that organizations do not want them to participate.

Young people's engagement is often substantive rather than superficial. For instance, in 2008 young people 18-24 were significantly more likely to say that the candidate's position on the issues, rather than his leadership or personal qualities, was more important in determining their vote for president (69% versus 28%). Exit polls showed that young voters were aligned on the issues with the candidate they chose.

MYTH: YOUNG PEOPLE CANNOT BE MOBILIZED TO VOTE

Research shows that when young people are contacted, they respond. Mobilizing youth is a smart investment by campaigns. Youth are most likely to respond to contacts from people they trust, and by personal and interactive methods, such as telephone conversations, rather than automated messages.

MYTH: YOUNG PEOPLE = COLLEGE STUDENTS

Substantial portions (40.4%) of young eligible voters (age 18-29) do not have any college experience. Approximately a quarter of young eligible voters are in college (24.4%) and only 19.9% of young people have college degrees.

MYTH: VOTING IS THE ONLY WAY YOUNG PEOPLE CAN ENGAGE POLITICALLY

Youth are not only diverse demographically, but they engage in their community and politics in various ways. In 2008, nearly 18% of young people only voted, not being engaged in other ways. But 19% of young people were broadly engaged, participating both politically and civically through community groups.

MYTH: YOUNG PEOPLE ALL VOTE DEMOCRATIC

In 2008, not all youth voted for President Obama. That year, 32% of young voters chose Senator McCain, whereas 66% chose President Obama. Historically, the youth vote has been split more evenly.



CIRCLE IN THE NEWS

A SAMPLE OF RECENT ARTICLES:

- "SURVEY: MOST YOUNG ADULTS DO NOT KNOW THEIR STATE VOTING LAWS," BY KAUKAB JHUMRA SMITH, *YOUTH TODAY*, 8/1/2012
- "GOP DIVIDE DEEPENS ON ABORTION, IMMIGRATION, GAY RIGHTS," BY PAUL WEST, *CHICAGO TRIBUNE*, 8/27/2012
- "LIVE VIDEO DISCUSSION: WILL OBAMA STILL APPEAL TO YOUNG VOTERS?," BY MICHELLE MALTAIS, *LA TIMES*, 9/4/2012
- "ROVE: THE PRESIDENT'S FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH IS DRYING UP," BY KARL ROVE, *WALL STREET JOURNAL ONLINE*, 9/6/2012
- "THE YOUTH VOTE: CAN OBAMA RECREATE 2008'S MAGIC?," BY NICOLE GREENSTEIN, *TIME MAGAZINE ONLINE*, 9/6/2012
- "YOUTH FERVOR HIGH AT DNC, BUT LAGGING BEHIND 2008," BY BIANCA BROOKS, *NPR*, 9/6/2012
- "OPINION: YOUTH VOTE CRITICAL TO 2012 ELECTION," BY BETHANY BIRON, *USA TODAY*, 9/7/2012
- "MY VIEW: HOW SCHOOLS SHOULD HANDLE 9/11 IN CLASS," BY PETER LEVINE, *CNN ONLINE*, 9/11/2012
- "COLLEGE STUDENTS: NEW HAMPSHIRE IS TRYING TO STOP US FROM VOTING," BY STACY TEICHER KHADAROO, *CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR*, 9/17/2012
- "STRUGGLING YOUNG ADULTS ARE QUESTION MARK FOR CAMPAIGNS," BY SUSAN SAULNY, *NEW YORK TIMES*, 9/20/2012
- "YOU GOT ID?," BY ALLIE GRASSGREEN, *INSIDE HIGHER ED*, 9/24/2012
- "THE YOUNGEST ONE-FOURTH OF US," BY JUDY WOODRUFF, *PBS NEWSHOUR (ONLINE)*, 9/26/2012
- "FEW STATES TEST STUDENTS ON CIVICS," BY NORA FLEMING, *EDUCATION WEEK*, 10/11/2012
- "THE MISSING MILLENNIALS," BY ZOË CARPENTER, *THE NATION*, 10/17/2012

NEW CIRCLE FACT SHEET EXAMINES STATE CIVIC EDUCATION STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS

With funding from the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, CIRCLE has analyzed the standards, course requirements, and mandatory assessments relevant to civic education in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. This is the first such scan in 5 years. The full analysis is summarized in our new fact sheet entitled State Civic Education Requirements, found here: <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=4422>

Some of the highlights include:

- ★ All states have standards for social studies, a broad category that includes civics/government along with other disciplines such as history and geography. The theme of power, authority, and government is included in all 51 states' social studies standards (including the District of Columbia's). The theme of civic ideals and practices is found in every state's standard except Missouri's.
- ★ Thirty-nine states require at least one course in American government or civics.
- ★ In the 2012-13 school year, 21 states require a state-designed social studies test. This is a similar number as in 2006 but a dramatic reduction compared to 2001, when 34 states conducted regular assessments on social studies subjects. Two states, Maryland and Florida, have recently instituted new social studies assessments, not yet required this year.
- ★ Just nine states require students to pass a social studies test in order to graduate from high school: Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. Georgia's assessment will be phased out but Maryland and Florida will add high-stakes tests.
- ★ Social studies assessments have shifted from a combination of multiple-choice and performance tasks to almost exclusively multiple-choice exams since 2000.



IS THERE A ROLE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN REDUCING THE GAP IN YOUTH CIVIC PARTICIPATION?

In August, CIRCLE released a major report entitled “That’s Not Democracy: How Out-of-School Youth Engage in Civic Life and What Stands in Their Way.” We found that young people are interested in civic and political issues—and when they are recruited to participate in organizations or events they often engage—but they face a general lack of opportunity, especially compared to peers who have any college experience. Since engagement early in life is related to later participation, today’s opportunity gap could foreshadow participatory gaps in the future.

We offered recommendations for several stakeholder groups, including policymakers, schools, and civic organizations. One sector for which we did *not* propose explicit recommendations was higher education. As we emphasize in the report, 42% of youth (18-29) do not have college experience and only 24% of 18- to-24 year-olds are college students in 2012. Yet colleges and universities have been called “anchor institutions” and “democracy schools,” suggesting that they have broad roles in their communities, not limited to educating their own students. What, if anything, could they do to engage youth not currently enrolled in college?

WHAT, IF ANYTHING, COULD THEY DO TO ENGAGE YOUTH NOT CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN COLLEGE?

The answer differs depending on the context of each specific community and the assets that exist within the institution and local organizations. One strategy is to try to increase matriculation rates to serve a broader range of young people. Here are a few examples of other ways in which campuses have tried to enhance the civic engagement of non-student youth:

SUPPORT AND PROMOTE OPPORTUNITIES FOR A WHOLE COMMUNITY

Young people who do not have college experience are less likely than college students to be registered to vote or to cast a ballot. They are also much more likely to be contacted by campaigns and parties and invited to participate in politics. In our focus groups, we found little evidence of organized political outreach to non-student youth. But there are exceptions. For example, the League of

Women Voters (LWV) has 800 state and local chapters working to “improve our government and engage all citizens in the decisions that impact their lives.” LWV chapters have found ways to engage higher education in providing low-income youth with more exposure to opportunities. The University of California-Fresno LWV chapter goes to local high schools to register voters. The Houston LWV has worked with higher education administrators to involve students in voter registration in local high schools and at concerts.

CAMPUS EFFORTS TO BUILD COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH (CBPR) OPPORTUNITIES CAN ALSO CREATE SPACES WHERE ALL YOUTH CAN PLAY IMPORTANT CIVIC ROLES AND BUILD SKILLS.

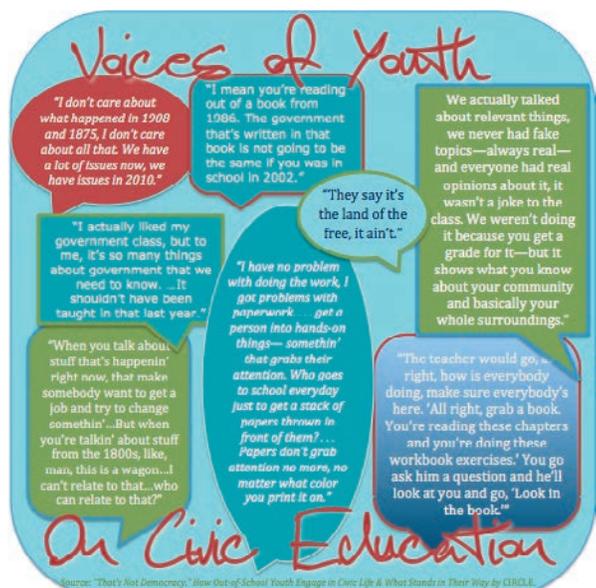
Campus efforts to build community-based participatory research (CBPR) opportunities can also create spaces where all youth can play important civic roles and build skills. An example related to Tufts is “*Nuestro Futuro Saludable: The Jamaica Plain Partnerships for Healthy Caribbean Latino Youth*.” With funding from the National Institutes of Health and the National Centers for Minority Health and Health Disparities, and in close partnership with community groups, Tufts professors Flavia C. Peréa and Linda Sprague Martinez engaged teenagers to design an intervention to address health disparities among Caribbean Latino youth. The teenagers offered essential expertise about their community and became civically engaged as part of their work.

PREPARE TEACHERS TO DO HIGH QUALITY CIVIC EDUCATION

K-12 schools reach a wide range of youth. Many of the young adults whom we interviewed in focus groups recalled poor experiences with civic education while they were still in school. An important role that higher education plays is preparing future teachers to serve all students. Research shows that simulations of democratic processes, interactive pedagogies, and opportunities to discuss current issues promote youth engagement. Schools of education can prepare teachers to use such pedagogies. The



TeacherCorps, for example, is a partnership between the University of New Mexico Community Engagement Center and Department of Teacher Education. The program engages future teachers with “innovative teacher preparation with a focus on community-based service-learning and civic engagement.”



HIGHER EDUCATION AS CONVENER

The departments and programs of a given university usually support a wide variety of specialties, topics, and community partnerships. As a result, an institution of higher education can serve as a convener in its community, not seeking to impart knowledge but to facilitate a discussion and bring people with diverse knowledge to the table. The Bonner Center for Civic and Community Engagement at the College of New Jersey (TCNJ) is working on just this task with respect to youth in the Trenton area. According to Pat Donohue, Assistant Provost for Community Engaged Learning Programs and Partnerships at TCNJ, this is a “grassroots project that leads to recommendations about preventing juvenile crime [and] promoting positive youth development.” Several stakeholders have been a part of the project, including youth from the local YouthBuild site and high schools, who contribute their own experiences and knowledge to help envision new ways to engage youth in Trenton. Professors also sit on each Working Group and complete literature reviews—thereby combining youth, community and campus expertise before finalizing recommendations.

AS A RESULT, AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION CAN SERVE AS A CONVENER IN ITS COMMUNITY, NOT SEEKING TO IMPART KNOWLEDGE BUT TO FACILITATE A DISCUSSION AND BRING PEOPLE WITH DIVERSE KNOWLEDGE TO THE TABLE.

INSTITUTIONAL REFLECTION ON REAL OUTCOMES

Lastly, colleges and universities should reflect on their impact on non-students. These institutions choose to admit some young people and not others. Do their students learn knowledge, values, and skills that will allow them to act democratically and equitably in their post-graduate work? Does treating college students as future leaders send a message that other youth are not leaders? These are questions that deserve explicit consideration in colleges that hope to support civic renewal. ★



Continued from Page 5

Consider too consumers who have retained some assets in a recession. Like executives and investors, consumers have three options:

- (1) hold onto their savings until economic conditions improve;
- (2) purchase goods or services from far away, or
- (3) pay local people to provide goods or services.

Again, consumers may be most likely to choose the third option if they know and trust local service-providers and care about their communities.

Although more research is necessary, the case is building. At the release, Sarah Bloom Raskin, a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, said:

I am very interested in exploring this link between civic engagement and economic resilience. I want to say I was really excited to receive a copy of the research and send it out to various Fed researchers. ... It is an extremely important topic. ... First of all,

I should commend the researchers for both the important timeliness of the work and, I think, the analytical rigor that it was conducted under. ... I like the research for many reasons, but one, I think, is that it shows us, potentially, that civic engagement is a kind of softening agent; it's a buffer that keeps unemployment from being much higher than it could be.

Read more and access the full report here: <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=4394> ★



CIRCLE
Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship
and Public Service
Lincoln Filene Hall
Tufts University
Medford, MA 02155

