

## WHY YOUNG PEOPLE ARE VOLUNTEERING IN RECORD NUMBERS

**I**t has been well documented that young people today are volunteering at unprecedented rates. A new CIRCLE Working Paper by Lewis A. Friedland and Shauna Morimoto examines the motivating factors behind this rise in volunteering.

The researchers found that for middle- and upper-middle-class high school students “resume-padding” is one of the motivating factors driving the increase in volunteering. According to Dr. Friedland, “Much of the reported volunteerism was shaped by the perception that voluntary and civic activity is necessary to get into any college; and the better the college (or, more precisely, the higher the perception of the college in the status system) the more volunteerism students believed was necessary. Many of the middle- and upper-middle-class youth are explicitly volunteering for the purpose of what they themselves called ‘resume-padding.’”

In addition to the resume-padding, the study finds that several other factors are motivating the rise in volunteer activity, and these factors vary by class and racial position, ideological disposition, and religious involvement. Finally, the report contains a typology of youth volunteering.

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The study is based on detailed interviews of almost 100 residents of Madison, Wisconsin, between the ages of 14 and 19, sampled from various schools and community centers. Madison is a city with robust civic engagement, so the sample included a wide variety of civic behaviors.

## INCREASED PRESSURE TO ATTEND COLLEGE RESHAPES CIVIC MOTIVATORS

Surveys have found that high school students of all classes, with virtually no significant racial, ethnic, or gender differences, expect to attend college. According to Dr. Friedland, “We found that students recognize that their future life chances rest on ‘college,’ whether defined as the local community college, the lesser state university, a public flagship, or the ‘best’ private schools, much as an earlier generation depended on a high school diploma.” This realization in turn has created anxiety among high-school-aged youth about how they can improve their chances for college admission. Under these circumstances, young people of all classes are approaching service as (in part) an instrumental price to pay for college admission.

Moreover, the research shows that young people do not understand the criteria for admission to the different types of higher education. Young people interviewed in the study widely believed that significant service is a requirement for admission to all types of schools, includ-

IN THIS ISSUE

1 Why Young People are Volunteering in Record Numbers

3 Letter from CIRCLE’s Director

≡ RESEARCH ROUNDUP

4 Working College Students Post Highest Rates of Political Engagement

6 African American Inner-City Teens and Civic Engagement

8 New Study Finds No Big Gender Gap in Civic Engagement

≡ CIRCLE GRANTS

9 CIRCLE Announces New Research Grant Competition

≡ FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

10-11 Integrating Youth Voice in City Government: Young People as Community Resources



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Continued from page 1

ing technical colleges and state schools in which a moderate GPA virtually guarantees admission. However, these service expectations only come into play in genuinely selective schools, those with an admissions rate of 50 percent or less, and even here the amount of service only becomes a major criterion in highly selective schools. Nevertheless, the researchers found that a kind of "service inflation" has spread downward in the class structure.

## TPOLOGY OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

Alongside of the resume-padding, however, the researchers did find significant other forms of activity, with different motivations that themselves varied by class and racial position, ideological disposition, and religious involvement. Following is a typology of volunteers developed from the interviews:

1. The first type Friedland and Morimoto identify is college bound youth, of the middle- and upper-middle-classes. They produce the majority of service-based volunteerism. These are the young people most engaged in resume padding for college, and they often do so self-consciously, with awareness of their own motives and little or no sense that this instrumental orientation compromises their motives. For example, one student said he does "as much service-learning as I can because they like that apparently." Asked where he got this impression he replied: "I don't know, it's just what a lot of my graduating friends have told me. The more service-learning, the more community service you have, like the better you look and the more it'll count for your bad GPA or whatever."
2. A subtype of the middle-class resume padders are well-integrated college bound youth, often from civically- or politically-oriented middle- and upper-middle-class families, who have articulated ideological or moral motivations for engaging in civic or political activity. These young people are also engaged in resume padding, but their motives are mixed. They simply assume that these activities are what they should do, and need to do, but also have other motivations.
3. A further subtype of resume padders are those whom Friedland and Morimoto call "civic youth." They are young people engaged in explicit and highly civic activities, for example membership on youth boards. *Continued on page 5*

**CIRCLE** (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. Although CIRCLE conducts and funds research, not practice, the projects that we support have practical implications for those who work to increase young people's engagement in politics and civic life. CIRCLE is also a clearinghouse for relevant information and scholarship. CIRCLE was founded in 2001 and is funded predominantly by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and The Pew Charitable Trusts. It is based in the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy.

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## A LETTER FROM CIRCLE'S DIRECTOR

This year has been, and will continue to be, one of transition for the organization, but we are confident that CIRCLE is well-positioned to do important work in the years ahead.

Let us begin with the changes. CIRCLE's founding director, Bill Galston, will be leaving the University of Maryland at the end of the calendar year to assume a new position as a Senior Fellow in the Brookings Institution's Governance Studies Program. At the same time, he will be stepping down as CIRCLE's director, and Peter Levine, who has served as deputy director since July 2001, will take his place. Galston will remain affiliated with CIRCLE as a senior advisor, spending roughly 20 percent of his time on CIRCLE affairs through the end of 2006. We are confident that this transition will be smooth and that the organization will not miss a beat.

Another departure may turn out to be harder to address. Our superb executive assistant, Demetria Sapienza, who has served CIRCLE so well, is heading toward a well-deserved retirement and a newly constructed dream house near the North Carolina shore. With a heavy heart, we are in the early stage of looking for her successor.

Carrie Donovan, our excellent youth director, moved to California this summer and has taken a position with Cal Corps, the public service center at UC-Berkeley. We were delighted to hire Abby Kiesa as her replacement. Abby previously worked for Madison House at the University of Virginia and then the national office of Campus Compact. We are also at the final stages of hiring a new research associate who will participate in many aspects of

our work, especially the secondary data-analysis that produces CIRCLE fact sheets and press releases.

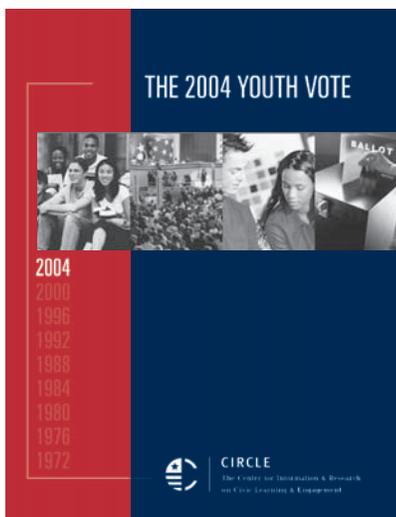
CIRCLE's financial situation is secure for the time being. Last July, The Pew Charitable Trusts made a grant of \$1.3 million. In addition to providing core operating support for CIRCLE, Pew's funding will allow us to conduct a national survey of youth, based largely on the poll fielded in 2002 by Scott Keeter and colleagues. We are committed to making the data from that survey public in a timely way. In addition, the Carnegie Corporation of New York has made a \$1 million grant, effective January 1, 2006, to support CIRCLE's research on civic education for young people of high school age. We will reserve half of that money for external research grants. The Request for Proposals was released on November 1 (see p. 9 for details), and our grants will be made in the spring.

Meanwhile, we continue to manage a set of "youth-led" research projects funded by the Cricket Island Foundation, and are actively seeking other opportunities to study various aspects of youth civic engagement. CIRCLE's staff also continues to be extremely active in coalitions and networks, especially the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools and networks for youth voting, service-learning, and civic education at the college level.



William A. Galston, Director

Peter Levine, Deputy Director



## NEW REPORT ON YOUTH VOTING

**CIRCLE has released a comprehensive report chronicling the youth vote from 1972-2004. The report contains information on youth voting patterns by race, ethnicity, gender, and educational and marital status. The report can be downloaded from CIRCLE's web site at [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org). To request a hard copy, please email Demetria Sapienza at [dsapienz@umd.edu](mailto:dsapienz@umd.edu).**



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## RESEARCH ROUNDUP

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.

### WORKING COLLEGE STUDENTS POST HIGHEST RATES OF POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

BY EMILY KIRBY

Young people who both study and work are busier than students who do not work. Nevertheless, student-workers report higher levels of interest in politics, newspaper reading, talking politics with friends, engaging or practicing civic skills, having been asked to vote, making their views known, and political participation. Many student-workers appear to be pursuing bachelor's degrees, but they are also more engaged, more open to politics, and less likely to feel dissuaded by potential barriers to participation than their peers who are attending college full-time. Whether they work or not, students between the ages of 19 and 23 tend to be more politically engaged than their peers who are out of school and college altogether.

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These are among the results of a new CIRCLE-sponsored telephone survey of 1,000 youth between the ages of 19 and 23, conducted and analyzed by Sharon Jarvis, Lisa Montoya, and Emily Mulvoy of the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation, University of Texas-Austin.

#### ENGAGING NON-COLLEGE YOUTH: IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING CIVIC SKILLS THROUGH K-12 EDUCATION

Even though they are rarely studied, there are more non-college youth than college students in the United States. Data show that roughly one-fourth of Americans do not enroll in formal schooling after obtaining a high school diploma. Politicians and policy makers speak mainly of sending more people to college, but a steady third of adults 25 and older have only finished high school. Furthermore, of those young people who are currently enrolled in an educational institution, the majority also work. Thus, it is important to study working youth if we hope to increase political and civic participation.

Consistent with previous studies, this new poll found that non-college youth in the 19 to 23 age range report lower levels of political socialization and interest than college students, as well as fewer civic skills, group memberships and mobilization opportunities.

Non-college youth are less likely to engage in a set of political acts than their college attending peers. However, the data also reveal some opportunities. Non-college youth are more likely to participate if they have been raised in families that discuss politics and if they are themselves interested in politics. Those who belong to groups and express an interest in politics may be ripe for mobilization, since they already have a moderate amount of the social connections that motivate them to politics through group memberships. They possess and use the skills that can be helpful in politics, and they seem to possess the basic psychological antecedents that predispose people to participation in politics.

For non-college young people, the development of specific skills (e.g., writing letters, making decisions in meetings, chairing meetings and giving speeches) seems to promote participation. Indeed, each additional skill cultivated by a young worker appears to result in a small but significant increase in political participation—which is not true of college students in the same age range. Thus, the study supports the need to teach civic skills before people leave K-12 schools.

#### COLLEGE STUDENT WORKERS MORE LIKELY TO BE CIVICALLY ENGAGED THAN OTHER COLLEGE STUDENTS

Jarvis, Montoya, and Mulvoy also find interesting and positive connections between working and attending school and political activity. "Those young people who play the dual role of student and worker are, overall, more politically engaged. They are more likely to talk about politics, join political groups, and be asked to vote," Jarvis noted. This outcome is unexpected given the research that indicates that full-time students tend to be raised in households that offer more discussions about political life and where parents are more likely to be civically active. "One explanation could be that busy and involved parents raise busy and involved children," explains Jarvis. "Even though the full-time students had slightly richer political socialization experiences, student-workers may have received cues from their parents about being engaged, involved and working hard."

The project, begun in October 2003, conducted a phone survey of 1,012 young adults between the ages of 19 and 23 from three states to learn more about the political resources (education and civic skills), psychological predispositions (political socialization and political interest), social connections (personal relationships and

organizational memberships), political opportunities (mobilization efforts), schooling, work experiences, and political activity of these young people.

Two reports have emerged from the survey. The first divided the sample into two groups: "workers" (young people who claimed that they were not currently attending school and had their highest level of education as something less than a bachelor's degree) and "students" (young people who were seeking a bachelor's degree as well as those who had completed bachelor's degrees and were at the time of the survey pursuing advanced degrees). The full report, "CIRCLE Working Paper 36: The Political Participation of Working Youth and College Students," can be downloaded from [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org).

In the second report, Jarvis, Montoya and Mulvoy segmented their

youth respondents in a novel way, examining three categories: "students," "workers," and "student-workers." In this project, respondents were coded as "students" if they were not currently employed and if they were currently attending any educational institution (whether it was a two or four year college, or a certificate program); "workers," if they were not currently enrolled in any type of educational institution and if they had not completed a bachelor's degree; and "student-workers," if they were currently enrolled in any type of educational institution and were currently employed.

In general, student-workers proved more engaged than students who are not working. The report, entitled "CIRCLE Working Paper 37: The Political Participation of College Students, Working-Students and Working Youth," discusses the results in detail and can be downloaded from [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org). 

*Continued from page 2*

From the outside, they would be identified as among the most highly

civic young people in the community, and indeed in many respects they are. But their motives are also complex, linked to both resume padding and social position.

4. A fourth type, religious young people, varied in their motives, some engaging in civic activity out of an explicit sense of religious duty, either to God or to their church community. For others, although religious motives and institutions were a significant part of the background and language, civic and community activity seemed to be linked to resume padding motives.
5. Another type the researchers identified were working- and lower-class young people, often minorities, that they encountered in community based-clubs, and neighborhood after-school centers. These young people had strong community orientations that seemed go beyond immediate self-interest to an expressed interest in "helping the community" and, specifically, helping the younger children, their brothers and sisters, and neighborhood children, to build a better life.
6. A subset of the sample were politically engaged youth, with explicitly anti-establishment orientations, that sometimes were ideological, but often seemed visceral, linked to an awareness of the unfairness of their life situation. Although the stereotype of radical youth may be

those who are from more privileged, middle- and upper-middle-class backgrounds, many were from working and lower-middle-class families.

7. Finally, there was a loose type that Friedland and Morimoto call cultural rebels, with a loose cultural anti-authoritarianism that expressed itself in cultural identification with movements like hip-hop, or certain variants. Both motives and forms of engagement are diffuse.

#### TRANSMITTING CIVIC AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

The report concludes that the changing motivations behind volunteering could have implications for future civic capital. Dr. Friedland notes, "If the normative connections to community that may have characterized civic engagement in the past are, indeed, becoming hollowed out in a middle-class under enormous pressure to retain its position, the transmission of social and civic capital across generations may be more precarious than survey data alone indicate" The full report, entitled "CIRCLE Working Paper 40: The Changing Lifeview of Young People: Risk, Resume-Padding, and Civic Engagement," can be downloaded from [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org). 

## RESEARCH ROUNDUP

**AFRICAN AMERICAN INNER-CITY TEENS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

Research by Michelle Charles explores how young, inner-city African American youth define “civic engagement” and its relationship to mainstream civic institutions and civic life. The author argues that for the African American community the concept of “giving back to community” is an important component of civic engagement that has not been formally recognized. Further, she offers recommendations for youth-serving civic engagement professionals and researchers working with inner-city African American teenagers.

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Complete findings are contained in “CIRCLE Working Paper 38: Giving Back to the Community: African American Inner-City Teens and Civic Engagement,” which can be downloaded from CIRCLE’s Web site at [http://www.civicyouth.org/research/areas/race\\_gender.htm](http://www.civicyouth.org/research/areas/race_gender.htm).

The ethnographic study is based on interviews with 15-to-19 year-old African Americans in the most inner-city neighborhoods of West and North Philadelphia. In addition, the author interviewed a variety of local residents who work with young people, including professionals from “at-risk” youth-serving civic engagement organizations, community activists, and randomly selected African American adults. Both focus groups and individual interviews were used to gather the data.

**GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY: A TYPE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

The study attempts to define the inner-city African Americans’ version of “civic engagement” and its relationship to mainstream civic institutions and civic life. The research begins by comparing the notion of “giving back to the community” with “civic engagement.” According to Ms. Charles, “As a Black American in my community life as well as in my life as a civic engagement professional, I have frequently heard African Americans in particular liberally use the phrase ‘giving back to the community’ to express efforts at strengthening and sustaining civic life in Black communities. From the contexts of my conversations over the years, there could be no doubt that the phrase intimated for African Americans the work of being involved and invested in the development of fellow citizens

and community environments for the purposes of contributing to and reaping the benefits of the collective functions of society.”

Her interviews revealed that the phrase “giving back to the community” is a distinctly adult term steeped in oral tradition, faith, and the success of individuals as well as the group. While young people are aware of the term, they do not fully understand the many meanings of the term. Ms. Charles notes, “The youth still have a life-long way to go in fully understanding the idea of ‘giving back to the community’ for themselves, and the adults of the African American community have not come to the point of recognizing their historical storehouse of knowledge for passing on to the youth for prosperity.”

In order to help young people understand and appreciate the concept of “giving back to the community,” Ms. Charles suggests that civic engagement organizations formally recognize the term “giving back to the community” as a form of civic engagement. This form would be similar to another type of civic engagement, service-learning, but it would differ in that it would place a distinct focus on the real life experiences of the service giver. “Giving back to the community” would differ from service-learning in that it would offer service opportunities for young, inner-city African Americans that are directly relevant to their lives. For example, service projects would be designed to focus on social problems that are unique to the inner-city African American population. According to the author, “As the organizational interviewees indicated, these youth are scarcely finding program activities that are seriously relevant to their lives.”

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**IMPROVING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS FOR INNER-CITY YOUTH**

Based on her research, Ms. Charles offers recommendations on how youth serving organizations and researchers can incorporate “giving back to the community” into their practice and research.

## RESEARCH ROUNDUP

Following are a few of the recommendations.

1. *Community adults are the gatekeepers of authentic youth engagement.* Because of the cultural norm of deferring to a generational hierarchy that exists within the African American community—one shared by both the adults and the youth alike—professionals in civic engagement organizations must actively work to seek out and maintain relationships with the various adult community members who are connected to the “at-risk” youth they seek to assist. They should not attempt to seek out long-term relationships with the youth only. People in these often volatile neighborhood environments demand adherence to a code of respect from outsiders, and approaching these community members respectfully as the rightful gatekeepers to the children of the community is a sign of cultural sensitivity that will likely be rewarded by trust and access.

The level of sustained trust needed for making progress in these inner-city communities can only be built through prolonged personal contact with the community’s decision-making adults. These activists are out working in the community (versus in an office) throughout the day and night—in accordance with the population’s schedule—so researchers should limit their use of voicemail and email when attempting to work with this population. Researchers must go out and meet people where they “are”—on the street, in the various sites throughout the community, at various community events—with a full knowledge that this initial process of relationship-building will be at least a month long.

2. *Recruit through faith-based organizations.* The level of civic mapping involved in recruiting the most marginalized inner-city youth for a formal program is immensely labor intensive. For efficiency’s sake, civic engagement professionals should focus on tapping faith-based groups’ program administrators, secretaries, program associates and program volunteers first and foremost when seeking to recruit non-academically inclined “at-risk” youth.
3. *Cultural differences can impede civic engagement work.* Some interviewees said that they observed African

American, inner-city students “thriving in their mentoring roles with younger children,” while White suburban students were observed as thriving in “project planning and organizing roles.” The African American students were said not to be as accomplished at such planning, organizing and follow-through activities. Perhaps the urban students objected to certain types of projects (such as “clean-ups”) as opposed to projects that enrich human capital, such “mentoring”—activities that are more frequently observed of neighborhood adults who are “giving back to the community.” Typical service projects may seem cosmetic to these youth and they may engage in a “silent protest” when asked to participate.

Along with expanding the list of legitimately considered types of civic engagement headings and corresponding actions to include “giving back to the community,” incorporating a degree of staff diversity training into organizational programming can help address the repeated communications breakdowns that occur between community members and program professionals. These breakdowns lessen the potentially wide-ranging impact of good, well-intentioned programs. ■

#### SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS LESS APPRECIATIVE OF THE FIRST AMENDMENT THAN STUDENTS IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

Suburban high school students are less appreciative of the First Amendment than their counterparts in urban and rural areas, according to recent analysis of a national survey of 112,000 students sponsored by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The study, conducted by researchers at the University of Connecticut and released earlier this year, shows that educators are not giving high school students an appreciation of free speech and free press.

For more information, visit <http://firstamendment.jideas.org/index.html>.

## RESEARCH ROUNDUP

**NEW STUDY FINDS NO BIG GENDER GAP IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT****WOMEN LEAD IN VOLUNTEERING BUT LAG IN POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE AND ATTENTIVENESS**

New CIRCLE research finds that there is no major “gender gap” in civic engagement among today’s young people. According to Dr. Krista Jenkins, the lead researcher, “Across most of the options for participation in public life, the sexes are remarkably similar in both what they choose to do and what they tend to avoid. Although there are some interesting differences—such as rates of voluntarism and political knowledge and attentiveness—gender does not appear to be playing a significant role in shaping civic engagement among youth.”

The research finds that generally women do not enter adulthood with tendencies that make them any less likely to be engaged citizens than men. However, there are some small differences in the development of precursors to civic engagement. For example, women are less aware of news and public affairs than their male counterparts and also know less about politics, government and the political process. On the other hand, young women lead the way in volunteering and are significantly more likely to believe that it is their responsibility, rather than their choice, to get involved to make things better for society.

*The research finds that generally women do not enter adulthood with tendencies that make them any less likely to be engaged citizens than men.*

The research was conducted by Dr. Krista Jenkins of the Center for American Women and Politics at the Eagleton Institute of Politics which is housed at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. The research is based mainly on data from the National Civic Engagement Survey (NCES), a survey of 1,001 15 to 25 year olds (Dot Netters) and 1,000 26 to 37 year olds (Gen Xers). The survey was conducted in the Spring of 2002.

**VOLUNTEERING: A PATH TO POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT FOR WOMEN?**

While generally there were no major differences between men and women on most civic engagement measures, there were some variations. In particular, young women outpaced their male counterparts in rates of volunteering. Almost half of all women age 15 to 25 (45%) reported volunteering for at least one type of

non-political organization in the past year, compared to only 36 percent of young men.

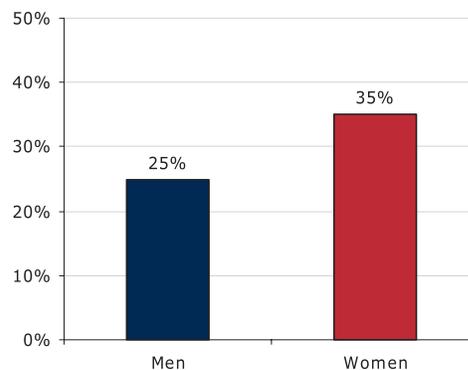
There is some evidence that suggests female volunteers are engaged in more activities that can be classified as political. And, volunteering seems to have some positive spill-over effects into the political arena for young women. According to the author, “To some extent, it appears that volunteering among young women is more consequential for engagement—and in particular electoral engagement—than it is for young men.” One hypothesis is that volunteering may be politicizing young women which, in turn, encourages them to get involved in influencing the political process.

**WOMEN LAG BEHIND IN MEASURES OF COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT**

The report also found that women lag behind men in their levels of attentiveness to the news and public affairs and in turn their levels of knowledge about politics, government, and political affairs. Other research has identified these measures as important precursors to civic engagement.

According to the report, more than a third of all women between

**Graph 1: Cognitive Disengagement Among 15-25 year olds, by Gender**



Source: Krista Jenkins, “Gender and Civic Engagement: Secondary Data Analysis.” CIRCLE Working Paper 41, November 2005.

the ages of 15 and 25 (35%) qualify as cognitively disengaged, compared with only a quarter of young men (25%) (See Graph 1).<sup>1</sup> Four in ten young men report regularly reading the newspaper, compared to a third of young women.

Continued on page 12

<sup>1</sup> Cognitive engagement was measured by: following politics and government most of the time, engaging in frequent discussions about politics and public affairs with family and friends, and regularly reading the newspaper or watching the nightly news on television.

*Our Grants column provides valuable information on the CIRCLE grant application process.*

## **CIRCLE ANNOUNCES NEW RESEARCH GRANT COMPETITION**

### **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: CIVIC EDUCATION AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL**

Thanks to generous funding from Carnegie Corporation of New York, CIRCLE (The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement) will make grants to support research on civic education at the high school level.

#### **GOALS**

CIRCLE funds rigorous research, not advocacy, education, or other forms of practice. However, all CIRCLE-funded research should be relevant to and have implications for public policy and/or practice.

In this Request for Proposals (RFP), CIRCLE is seeking research that will help educators and policymakers to improve civic outcomes for US students of high-school age (roughly 14-18). "Civic outcomes" include, but are not limited to:

- knowledge of politics, democracy and civil society;
- knowledge of social issues;
- values such as tolerance, trust, patriotism, concern for others' rights and well-being, and efficacy (the belief that one can make a difference);
- skills and habits of deliberating about public issues and participating in politics and community affairs;
- volunteering and membership in voluntary and/or nonprofit groups; and
- intentions to vote and to consider careers in public service (in the government or nonprofit sectors).

CIRCLE is interested in research on interventions and reforms that may enhance civic outcomes. These interventions and reforms include, but are not limited to:

- programs of civic education and classes on history, democracy, or law;
- approaches to the teaching of other disciplines that may have civic benefits;
- co-curricular activities, including student government and student media;
- service-learning;
- games and simulations that involve political or civic issues;
- student voice or participation in the governance of their schools;
- the basic structure of high schools (including their size, focus,

requirements, climate, admissions criteria, or composition);

- professional development for teachers, so long as the effects on students can be assessed; and
- after-school or community-based programs, insofar as these have the potential to reach large numbers of adolescents or to change mainstream education.

In most CIRCLE-funded research projects, the outcomes will be civic knowledge, values, skills, or behaviors. However, we are also interested in research that explores whether being civically engaged helps academic outcomes or positive adolescent development.

#### **PARAMETERS FOR RESEARCH**

CIRCLE welcomes all rigorous methodologies, including qualitative, normative, and quantitative studies. We have funded, and expect to fund in the future, genuine field experiments, quasi-experimental designs, longitudinal studies, cross-sectional surveys, re-analysis of existing datasets, historical studies, qualitative designs such as ethnographies, interviews, and case studies, and normative arguments.

CIRCLE welcomes proposals from academics, students (especially PhD candidates at the dissertation stage), independent scholars, practitioners, and research nonprofits and firms.

CIRCLE also welcomes proposals from youth of high school age, perhaps working in partnership with adults. Such youth-led research proposals will be evaluated separately and not compared directly to proposals from adults.

CIRCLE generally prefers independent studies over projects in which participants describe and evaluate their own work. CIRCLE will fund program evaluations only to the extent that they generate significant findings for other groups. In other words, we will fund research that uses programs as opportunities to test general hypotheses; *we will not support program evaluations for the purpose of measuring or improving the performance of particular organizations or programs.*

**For information on Procedures and Deadlines, including requirements for Letters of Inquiry, please go to the CIRCLE web site at: [www.civicyouth.org/whats\\_new/RFP.htm](http://www.civicyouth.org/whats_new/RFP.htm).**

## RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

*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. Additionally, it presents concrete examples of how practitioners have applied this research to encourage the participation of young people in civic and political life.*

### INTEGRATING YOUTH VOICE INTO CITY GOVERNMENT: YOUNG PEOPLE AS COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The purpose of youth civic engagement is not only to develop leaders and effective citizens for tomorrow; it is also to tap the knowledge, energy, and passion of young people today—for their benefit and the benefit of their communities. This is a challenge that the city government and community members have taken up in Hampton, VA. Hampton's efforts "provide the most ambitious case to date to institutionalize youth civic engagement across the city", as Carmen Sirianni discusses in the recent "CIRCLE Working Paper 31: Youth Civic Engagement: Systems Changes and Culture Change in Hampton, Virginia". Since the early 1990's, the community of Hampton, VA, has focused on re-envisioning its underlying values and structure to appreciate and involve youth as resources in their community. These long-term efforts are now being coordinated out of the Hampton Coalition for Youth, a department in city government.

Dr. Sirianni suggests that three principles underlie efforts to incorporate youth voice in city government: Building Infrastructure, Training Staff and Citizens, and Federal Policy Support.

#### HOW OTHER CITIES CAN BEGIN: BUILDING INTENTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

While young people, government officials, and community leaders have been engaged in this cultural change process for over a decade, other cities should not be intimidated by the length of time that members of the Hampton community have put into their work or the fact that they started with a series of major grants. Creating an important role for youth is certainly a long-term process, but according to Cindy Carlson, Director of the Hampton Coalition for Youth, "what makes our system work is that we invest in honoring all types of engagement of young people...and you don't need a grant to do this." Carlson suggests that cities that are interested in looking at the role that young people play in the life of their community start by asking themselves two questions: What's our community's response to young people? And, what are the opportunities open to them? Answers to these questions will help to determine where gaps, challenges and resources exist that will play a role in constructing a distinct path for moving forward.

Hampton's long-term vision of youth engagement began by engaging a broad group of young people in activities within clubs, churches, community organizations, and classrooms. A common

approach to incorporating youth voice in public life is to identify one or two, usually high achieving youth to serve on a committee with adults. As an alternative, Hampton involved a wider range of young people, and this played an important role in the process of changing perceptions of young people.

According to Dr. Sirianni, this initial stage of involving a broad group of youth serves as an "entry portal to community engagement and the development of a civic ethic", while "more complex tasks can be intentionally designed as "pathways" to develop progressively higher civic skill sets..."

Cindy Carlson credits the city's relationship with Alternatives, Inc., a non-profit youth development agency, for the success of this strategy. The staff of Alternatives, Inc., is present in neighborhoods and schools, working directly with young people. As a result, they were able to attract "a wide range of young people and help to place [these] young people in the various opportunities that [the city] had."

#### SHIFTING ATTITUDES BY TRAINING STAFF AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Dr. Sirianni writes that "participation that does not progressively change institutional practices and cultures will not fundamentally empower youth." Training played a central role in Hampton's efforts as a vehicle to challenge people's mindsets towards youth. Both city officials as well as community leaders attended various trainings at early and intermediate stages of the city-wide effort. This training was done by Alternatives, Inc., which operates as a site for the BEST Initiative, an effort supported by the National Training Institute at the Academy for Educational Development.

The training helped participants put into perspective the goals and values underlying the efforts in Hampton that focus on seeing young people as resources. Carlson suggests that this was hard for most people to understand at first. "The reason we're doing this is to make our community better, not because it's only good for Johnny. It's so he can bring something back and make a difference in his neighborhood. It's good for us." In addition to training for more active youth, the trainings for staff and community members have changed the context in which the young people are involved by creating an atmosphere that seeks and supports youth voice.

## RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

**SUPPORT FOR CITY-WIDE EFFORTS**

While Dr. Sirianni suggests exploring “federal policy designs that provide incentives for city governments to innovate,” at this time there are no such federal policies or programs planned.

Those interested do, however, have resources in colleagues around the country doing similar work. The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families at the National League of Cities has compiled an action kit for municipal leaders on promoting youth participation. This action kit gives an overview of efforts in several cities across the country.

In early 2005, Hampton was awarded the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award, which requires the city to disseminate information and act as a resource to those interested in working to facilitate similar changes to the perceptions and role of youth in their communities.

**SUSTAINING THE MOMENTUM**

Now that the efforts in Hampton are coordinated out of an office in city government, Carlson and her colleagues are aware of the opportunities and changes that come with institutionalization.

As a means to sustain the energy and organic nature of their efforts, they have deliberately tried to support non-institutional opportunities. They’ve done this through a focus on neighborhood work and continued support for a wide range of youth activities.

For example, the Coalition for Youth advised Alternatives, Inc., is writing a grant proposal focused on supporting youth community-based activism and organizing. The grant, from the W.K. Kellogg Youth Innovation Fund, was not sponsored by local government but it is now playing an important role in the overall youth engagement strategy in Hampton by supporting a new coalition of youth groups.

While Hampton has not emphasized evaluation of its efforts, Carlson was happy to point out that Hampton’s young adult voting rates are above the national average and may suggest that youth have developed a habit of participation.<sup>1</sup> That said, she stressed her reliance on the feedback the Coalition gets on their results and the knowledge that if an outcome is better and if young people are engaged in that effort, two important goals are being met. ■

<sup>1</sup> According to Cindy Carlson young people in Hampton, VA, voted in 2004 at rates of 55% (18-19 year olds), 71% (19-21 year olds), and 56% (22-25 year olds). CIRCLE data show that nationally 47% of 18-24 year old citizens voted in 2004.

**LINKS AND RESOURCES**

**Hampton Coalition for Youth**  
[www.hampton.gov/for youth](http://www.hampton.gov/for youth)

**Hampton Youth Commission**  
[www.areyouinthegame.com](http://www.areyouinthegame.com)

**National Training Institute (NTI)**  
[www.nti.aed.org](http://www.nti.aed.org)

**NTI BEST Initiative**  
[www.nti.aed.org/NationalBEST.html](http://www.nti.aed.org/NationalBEST.html)

**National League of Cities**  
[www.nlc.org/IYEF/](http://www.nlc.org/IYEF/)

**W.K. Kellogg Youth Innovation Fund**  
[www.theyouthfund.org](http://www.theyouthfund.org)

**NEW DATASETS AVAILABLE ON CIRCLE'S WEBSITE**

Datasets associated with the “The Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait” report are now available on CIRCLE’s web site. The newly available datasets include three data collections from 2002:

- ≡ National Civic Engagement Survey I (NCES I)
- ≡ National Civic Engagement Survey II (NCES II)
- ≡ National Youth Survey of Civic Engagement

These datasets can be found in SPSS, SAS Transport, STATA Version 6, and SDA versions. All supporting documentation is also available at [www.civicyouth.org/research/products/data.htm](http://www.civicyouth.org/research/products/data.htm).

Questions about the datasets can be directed to Mark Hugo Lopez at [mhlopez@umd.edu](mailto:mhlopez@umd.edu).

Continued from page 8

## NEW STUDY...

Similarly, only 42 percent of young women watch the nightly news on television on a regular basis compared to 49 percent of men.

Dr. Jenkins notes, "Given the trend in attentiveness it is no wonder women also know less about politics, government and the political process."

### PREPARING ENGAGED CITIZENS: DIFFERENT TACTICS FOR THE DIFFERENT GENDERS

From the research, it appears that young women and young men are motivated by different experiences. Young women who participate in more family discussions and observe paren-

tal modeling of good behavior are more likely to be civically engaged as they age. For young men, spending fewer hours in front of the television correlates with more active engagement.

In order to encourage more civic engagement among young men and women, it is important to note the different outcomes of early socializing experiences on the different genders. The author concludes, "While today's young men and women are motivated by many of the same precursors to civic engagement, it is equally important to recognize where young women differ and note the ways in which their activism can be encouraged. Young men get a sizeable boost simply by turning off the television. For young women, however, having good role models proves key to encouraging more citizen engagement." ■

Design: Lomangino Studio Inc.

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on Civic Learning & Engagement

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