Perhaps the greatest challenge facing civic education today is for educators, youth workers, policy makers and scholars to recognize the profound generational shift in citizenship styles that is occurring to varying degrees in most of the post-industrial democracies. The core of the shift is that young people are far less willing to subscribe to the notion held by earlier generations that citizenship is a matter of duty and obligation. This earlier sense of common commitment to participate at some level in public affairs was supported, indeed forged, within a group and class based civil society. The underlying sense of citizenship has shifted in societies in which individuals are more responsible for defining their own identities, using the various tools offered by social networks and communication media.

This broad generational change in the post industrial democracies involves a shift from a dutiful citizen (DC) model (still adhered to by older generations and many young people who are positioned in more traditional social settings) to an actualizing citizen (AC) model favoring loosely networked activism to address issues that reflect personal values. Dutiful Citizens have the following characteristics:

- Obligation to participate in government-centered activities
- Voting is the core democratic act, supported by surrounding knowledge and contact with government
- Becomes informed about issues and government by following mass media news
- Joins civil society organizations and/or expresses interests through parties or interest groups that typically employ one-way conventional communication to mobilize supporters

Contrast this with the orientation of Actualizing Citizens:

- Diminished sense of government obligation
- Higher sense of individual purpose
Continued from page 1

- Voting is less meaningful than other, more personally defined acts such as consumerism, community volunteering, or transnational activism
- Mistrust of media and politicians—rise of a participatory media culture
- Favors loose networks of community action – often established or sustained through friendships and peer relations and thin social ties maintained by interactive information technologies

These stark, clearly visible differences lead me to ask why public schools continue to teach civics to young people as if they are their grandparents, with regular news habits, and a developed sense that government and voting were of self evident importance? They do this, in part, because it is both politically safe and easily testable. But perhaps the persistence of ineffective approaches to civics in public schools is simply a reflection that most school policy officers, curriculum developers, education researchers, and many older teachers are, themselves, DC citizens.

Rather than wait for the slow possibility of such change in schools, we may want to consider the potential for civic learning to occur in online communities that offer the advantage of adapting familiar social technologies to more flexible learning designs.

We need to create or identify existing, informal learning environments within which young people can learn civic skills and practice citizenship. We should consider creative ways to link those informal environments back to formal organizations such as schools, libraries, and youth organizations so that they indirectly aid the civic missions of those formal organizations. Recognition of the potential for civic learning online has been advanced through encouragement from the MacArthur Foundation’s Digital Media and Learning initiative (http://digitallearning.macfound.org/site/c.enJLKQNfIg/b.2029199/k.BFC9/Home.htm) which supported a collaborative effort among an interdisciplinary group of scholars to chart an initial research and policy agenda for civic learning online. This group included Mike Xenos, Kirsten Foot, Kathryn Montgomery, Jennifer Earl, Alan Schussman, Merina Bers, Howard Rheingold, Peter Levine, and Stephen Coleman, along with myself. A book based on this collaboration, Civic Life Online, is available from M.I.T. Press both as a conventional volume, and as free PDF files from the press site (http://www.mitpressjournals.org/toc/dmal/-/1). Continuing research and discussions can be found on our project site Civic Learning Online (http://www.engagedyouth.org).

The CIRCLE community is welcome to participate in our blog, share research, and help us define the future of this exciting field. Inquiries can be addressed to me at lbennett@u.washington.edu.
CIRCLE JOINS THE JONATHAN M. TISCH COLLEGE OF CITIZENSHIP AND PUBLIC SERVICE AT TUFTS UNIVERSITY

CIRCLE (the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) has moved to the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, boosting both institutions’ strength in the field of youth civic and political engagement.

CIRCLE and Tisch College are two of the nation’s leading organizations devoted to researching civic and political engagement and developing young Americans into active and responsible citizens:

* The non-partisan CIRCLE, renowned for youth voter election data and analysis, conducts and promotes reliable, relevant and timely research on civic education, community service, young people’s use of the news and electronic media, and other aspects of youth civic and political engagement.

* A national leader in civic engagement, Tisch College prepares students from all fields of Tufts to become engaged public citizens and community leaders. Through a broad array of programming, Tisch promotes new knowledge in the field of civic engagement and gives students, faculty, and alumni the tools to be lifelong active citizens.

Please note our new contact information:

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From November through January 2008, CIRCLE piloted new software for community-based research and service-learning in a Baltimore city public high school. The development of this software, called YouthMap, is funded by a Small Business Innovation Research contract with the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education through a grant to Community Knowledgebase, LLP, a firm created at the University of Wisconsin (UW) by Professor Lewis A. Friedland. There is a related curriculum called CivNet created by Professor Friedland and Professor David Williamson Shaffer. CivNet can be used in social studies, service-learning courses, and classes on topics such as ecology. Both YouthMap and CivNet are in early stages of development.

BALTIMORE CITY STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE HOW YOUTHMAP WORKS

CIRCLE is collaborating with UW to test the software and curriculum, including a planned experiment with treatment and control groups. The first stage of testing took place in a Baltimore city public high school. In the Baltimore pilot test, students in American government selected an issue: poverty in their neighborhood. They conducted interviews (thus learning from formal and informal experts in their community) and quickly created a database consisting of hundreds of relevant organizations, issues, and individuals in Baltimore (see graphic below).

These items are represented as icons on a diagram that the software generated. Links on the diagram show actual connections. (For example, any two nonprofits that are partners are shown as linked.) Clicking on an icon or a link reveals detailed information that the students collected, including the addresses of organizations, the functions and purposes of organizations, and even (as in the below example) whole

www.civicyouth.org
RESEARCH ROUNDUP

*AROUND THE CIRCLE: RESEARCH & PRACTICE*

Students can use the map that they created to find out which organizations and individuals in any area work on a problem, what local experts say about each issue, how different problems are linked empirically and conceptually (e.g. high school dropout rates are linked to unemployment), which networks of civic organizations already exist, and where there is a lack of networking and coordination. The software helps students to make sense of the complex diagram they create by identifying clusters and patterns. They can also see the data on a geographical map onto which various data (such as crime statistics) can be layered (see graphic below).

At the end of the unit, students developed action plans for addressing the issue that concerned them in concert with local stakeholders. In a service-learning class, the next stage could involve implementing their action plans.

**INITIAL EVALUATION SUGGESTS YOUTHMAP INCREASES STUDENTS’ CIVIC COMMITMENTS**

Before and after they worked with YouthMap, the Baltimore students were given four survey items regarding their civic commitments. These questions formed a scale that had been tested by Joseph Kahne and Susan Sporte for a study on the Chicago Public Schools. The mean score rose by a statistically significant amount from the pretest to the posttest.

In questionnaires, about one quarter of the students offered that they will use what they learned in CivNet to address a problem or get more people involved. Examples of students responses included:

- “I will be more aware of how problems are connected and understand better what it’s like to try to solve them.”
- “I’ll probably get more involved in my community by volunteering at an outreach center.”
- “I will put more effort into trying to help stop gang violence by talking to peers.”
- “I will know more about the issues around Baltimore, and I will try to not contribute to the problems.”
- “I will use these techniques to stay informed about community issues.”
- “I could use the youthmap to look at common problems with the city and I could use the information for future assignments.”
- “This whole project made me more interested in helping the community so I will do that.”

**CIRCLE TO CONDUCT RANDOMIZED EXPERIMENT TO TEST EFFECTS OF YOUTH MAP**

CIRCLE has an agreement with the Hillsborough County, Florida (Tampa) Public Schools to conduct a randomized field experiment of CivNet, using an improved version of the software piloted in Baltimore. For more information on the project, please contact CIRCLE Outreach Coordinator and Researcher, Abby Kiesa at Abby.Kiesa@Tufts.edu.
DEEP DIVIDE IN PRIMARY YOUTH VOTE: 8 IN 10 YOUNG VOTERS WENT TO COLLEGE

New CIRCLE research shows that during the 2008 primaries and caucuses, young voters with college experience were much more likely to vote than their non-college counterparts. Although half of young Americans ages 18-29 have never enrolled in college, 79 percent of the young voters on Super Tuesday attended college, according to the new research. This gap was also evident in youth turnout rates: one in four eligible young voters with college experience voted on Super Tuesday, compared with one in 14 eligible young voters with no college experience.

“The overall rise in young Americans voting this primary season has been remarkable, but it’s disproportionately well-educated young people,” said CIRCLE Director Peter Levine. “Campaigns and interest groups mobilize youth on college campuses, but it’s harder to reach non-college youth, whose membership in unions, religious congregations, and community groups has fallen since the 1970s. We need to find a way to counteract this inequality and motivate all young people to vote so that their priorities and perspectives get attention. Research shows that schools can boost young people’s participation by providing civic education in the form of social studies classes, service opportunities, discussions of current events and other activities.”

HIGHER INCOME SCHOOL DISTRICTS OFFER MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ABOUT POLITICS AND CITIZENSHIP

Instead of making things more equal, though, school systems exacerbate this political inequality by providing more opportunities to learn about politics to higher income students, white students, and academically successful students, according to a new CIRCLE Working Paper (#59) by Joseph Kahne and Ellen Middaugh of the Civic Engagement Research Group (CERG) at Mills College. Students in higher-income school districts are up to twice as likely as those from average-income districts to learn how laws are made and how Congress works, for example. They are more than one-and-a-half times as likely to report having political debates and panel discussions.

In addition, African American students are less likely than white students to have civic-focused government classes and current events discussions, and to participate in simulations of civic processes. Latino students reported fewer opportunities to volunteer, participate in simulations and have discussion in an open classroom climate.

“Schools should not offer opportunities to develop a civic and political voice on the basis of race or income or academic standing. Unfortunately, both our California and national data indicate that this is occurring,” said Joseph Kahne, CERG’s Director of Research and Dean of the School of Education at Mills College.

The CERG study’s more positive findings show that schools can make a difference. Young people who receive civic learning opportunities develop civic commitments including a commitment to vote, regardless of race or socioeconomic status. These opportunities include:

- discussing current events,
- studying issues about which students care,
- experiencing an open climate for classroom discussions of controversial topics,
- studying government, history and related social sciences,
- providing opportunities to interact with civic role models
- engaging in after-school activities,
- learning about community problems and ways to respond
- working on service learning projects, and
- engaging in simulations.

“Schools are exacerbating inequality in voting when they could be narrowing the gap. The good news is that because schools reach a broader cross-section of youth than colleges, if they provide quality civic learning opportunities to all students, they can promote more equal participation,” said Kahne.

In response to this “Civic Opportunity Gap,” the study’s authors’ recommend:

- Making desired civic learning opportunities part of the curriculum that all students receive rather than voluntary opportunities for the most interested or academically
capable students.
• Providing professional development – especially for schools and teachers serving the groups of students that currently receive fewer opportunities.
• Assessing the degree to which all groups of students are receiving desired civic learning opportunities.

The CERG study draws on the IEA Civic Education Study, a nationally representative sample of ninth graders, and on a diverse set of more than 2,500 high school seniors in California. It was conducted in partnership with the Constitutional Rights Foundation and the California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools.

The Civic Engagement Research Group at Mills College conducts quantitative and qualitative research on youth civic engagement and the impact of civic learning opportunities on young people’s civic capacities and commitments. Through its research the group works to frame priorities and develop evidence supporting best civic education practices. www.civicsurvey.org

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**CIRCLE FACT SHEETS**

*CIRCLE* has produced numerous Fact Sheets, which are brief documents with basic information and graphs on various topics. The following Fact Sheets have been recently added to CIRCLE’s Web site:

- **Young Voters in the 2008 Primaries and Caucuses:** An estimated 6.5 million young people under the age of 30 participated in the 2008 primaries and caucuses. This fact sheet provides estimates of the number of young people who participated in the 2008 primaries and caucuses, shows how the youth vote increased between the 2000 and 2008 primaries (in states where data was available), and provides information on which candidates young people supported in 2008. Data sources used for the fact sheet include exit/entrance polls from the National Election Pool (NEP), vote tallies as reported by the media, and the U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS), March Demographic file.

- **The Youth Vote in the 2008 Super Tuesday States:** This fact sheet contains analysis of young voters in the Super Tuesday primaries and caucuses. It reveals a huge gap in turnout between youth who have college experience and those who have not attended college. It also portrays a diverse group of young voters, among whom whites are a minority. Data sources used for the fact sheet include exit/entrance polls from the National Election Pool (NEP), vote tallies as reported by the media, and the U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS), March Demographic file.

- **Quick Facts about Young Voters in the 2008 Primaries and Caucuses:** A series of state-by-state fact sheets about young voters in the 2008 presidential primaries and caucus states. Includes demographic information about young voters and past voting rates. Data sources used for these fact sheets include the U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS), March Demographic file and the U.S. Census CPS, November Supplement.
CIRCLE AND ROCK THE VOTE RELEASE SPECIAL REPORT ON YOUNG VOTERS

A recent report released by CIRCLE and Rock The Vote indicates that young people are voting in larger numbers across all demographic groups. The report shows that despite a persistent decline in youth voter turnout since 1972, the 2004 election cycle saw a dramatic increase in participation by adults between the ages of 18 and 29, a trend which continued into the 2006 midterm and 2008 presidential primary elections.

By tracking youth voter registration and turnout from 2000 to 2006, the authors found that not only is electoral participation by young people on the rise, but the demographic composition of the youth vote is changing significantly.

YOUNG VOTERS MORE DIVERSE

The research shows that as a group, young voters are more diverse than young voters of the 1990’s and older voters of today. Overall, young whites, African Americans, and those of mixed race have the highest voter turnout rates but all racial and ethnic subgroups increased their voter turnout rate from 2000 to 2004.

The increase in voter turnout is not driven by a few demographic groups, but instead represents a broad-based increase in participation among all groups studied. The greatest increases come from young voters who are working students, a group which increased their voter turnout by 14 percentage points between 2000 and 2004.

Young voters in the Northeast and Midwest increased their turnout by more than 10 percentage points, and young voters in all areas of the country saw an increase in youth voter turnout.

YOUNG VOTERS INCREASINGLY IDENTIFY AS DEMOCRATS

Participation and demographics are not, however, the only things changing within the youth voter bloc. The study also suggests that young voters are now increasingly likely to vote for Democratic candidates, and to a lesser extent, identify as Democrats. The trend is most striking in congressional elections, where in 2002 youth voters nearly evenly split their vote between the Democratic and Republican candidates. By 2006, though, young voters supported Democratic candidates by a margin of 21 percentage points.

According to the report, “In every presidential election since 1972, young voters preferred the candidate who ultimately won the presidential election and the popular vote. In the last two presidential cycles, however, young peoples’ candidate choice was different from that of their adult counterparts: they chose the Democratic candidates, Al Gore in 2000 and John Kerry in 2004.”
Unlike past elections, in 2000 and 2004, young voters expressed candidate preferences that were different from the general voting population.

Young voters are also slightly more likely to profess a liberal ideology. According to the report, fewer young people identified as moderate in the last election cycle. Compared to 2000, young voters in 2004 were more likely to identify as liberal (31 percent) and conservative (27 percent). In the 2006 midterm elections, the drop in moderates was offset by a nearly eight percentage point surge in young people who identified as liberal.


Article written by Connor Glennon, CIRCLE Undergraduate Assistant

CIRCLE IN THE NEWS

RECENT NEWS ARTICLES CITING CIRCLE RESEARCH...

- "The Year the Youth Vote Arrives" by E.J. Dionne, Jr., The Washington Post, 7/25/2008
- "McCain Vows to Court Young Voters" by Jeff Brady, NPR 7/21/2008
- "It’s the Medium, Not the Messenger" by Jose Antonio Vargas, The Washington Post, 5/23/2008
- "‘Other Youth Vote’ Is Harder to Mobilize" by Zoe Tillman, The Christian Science Monitor, 4/18/2008
- "Young Voters Could Put Obama or Clinton in the White House" by Nikki Schwab, U.S. News & World Report, 3/13/2008
- "Internet Spurs Upswing in Volunteerism" by Wendy Koch, USA Today, 3/13/2008
- "Campaigns Target Young Latinos in Texas" by Ben Adler, Politico, 2/29/2008
- "Super Tuesday A Mixed Bag for Dems; Youth Vote Favors Obama" by Michael Lipkin, CBSNews.com, 2/6/2008
In November 2007, CIRCLE released a major new report on college students’ political engagement entitled Millennials Talk Politics (MTP), based on 47 focus groups on 12 four-year campuses across the country. This ‘Research to Practice’ article provides concrete examples of how MTP has been used by students, college professors, and college administrators to encourage further student engagement.

**MTP: Main Findings and Recommendations**

**MAJOR FINDINGS**

1. Today’s College Students are More Engaged than Generation X Was
2. Millennials are Involved Locally with Others but are Ambivalent about Formal Politics
3. Millennials Dislike Spin and Polarized Debates and Seek Authentic Opportunities for Discussing Public Issues
4. Differences Among the Millennials: Colleges and Universities are Providing Very Unequal Levels of Opportunity for Civic Participation and Learning

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. All Students Need to have Opportunities for Civic and Political Participation, and
2. Students Need Opportunities and Space for Deliberation on Public Issues

**THE REPORT IN USE**

**IN THE CLASSROOM**

First-year students who enrolled in the class entitled Civic Participation and Community Leadership at Duke University were required to read Millennials Talk Politics. According to the class professor, Dr. Alma Blount, the report provided students with an excellent opportunity to think about “participation and their generation.” Furthermore, it gave them the opportunity “to think a little bit more clearly about their role [within the political system].” According Dr. Blount, using Millennials Talk Politics as a required reading provided students with a unique opportunity to learn “the art of having great political conversations” and a chance to “develop an understanding of a deeper context.”

**OPPORTUNITY FOR REFLECTION**

National Student Partnerships (NSP - www.nspnet.org), a student-led volunteer service organization, used the MTP report in a reflection exercise at their 2008 national conference. Every year their conference seeks to provide the opportunity for students to “share insights, challenges, and best practices as they pursue NSP’s mission.”

The 2008 NSP conference challenged students to think about “student motivations for service and methods for engaging in social change.” A closing panel was organized around the MTP report. After reading the report, each participant was given the opportunity to reflect on his or her own work with NSP, think about how political engagement plays a role in this work, and consider how working within the political system could help them to better achieve their goals.

**THINKING STRATEGICALLY**

One of the main findings from the MTP report is that students feel there are few opportunities on their campus for political engagement. With this finding in mind, CIRCLE staff worked with students and staff from the CalCorps
Public Service Center at UC-Berkeley to facilitate a workshop at the Western Regional Campus Compact Conference for campus administrators. The goal of the workshop was to help administrators reflect on the types of engagement opportunities they offer to their students and devise a “wish list” of the types of student engagement opportunities they want to support. The majority of participants said that their program or office does not provide all of the types of opportunities that they think it should. Not surprisingly, most of the missing opportunities were policy/politically-related.

**PROMOTING DISCUSSION**

*Millennials Talk Politics* will be a big part of the conversation this Fall at Wake Forest University, one of the twelve universities where CIRCLE held focus groups as a part of the study. Each year, incoming freshmen at the school are assigned a reading around a current issue, and during orientation they are required to attend a lecture by a nationally recognized expert on the topic. This year’s required reading is *Millennials Talk Politics*. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, a nationally known scholar and commentator on politics and the media, will speak to students on August 22nd, on trends in the 2008 election cycle and why they matter.

The text box to the right provides more examples of how the report can be used to facilitate political discussions on college campuses. Copies of *Millennials Talk Politics* report can be downloaded from www.civicyouth.org.

*CIRCLE* staff are also available to help you plan a reflection activity using the report. Please contact Abby Kiesa, CIRCLE Outreach Coordinator and Researcher, at Abby.Kiesa@Tufts.edu if you are interested in learning more about the MTP report.

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**Using MTP to Engage Students**

- Send a hard copy of the report to administrators and faculty on campus to start/continue conversations about civic and political engagement
- Distribute copies of the report to student service leaders and discuss the ways to connect policy and the political system to their program reflection/discussions
- Integrate the findings of the report into a leadership program to discuss civic and political leadership
- Host a discussion for members of campus about the 2008 election using findings from *Millennials Talk Politics* as a discussion prompt
- Work with a service-learning class to conduct similar focus groups on your campus using the questions at the end of *Millennials Talk Politics* to learn more about what students on your campus think
- Organize a panel discussion about how young people can play important roles in addressing public issues and invite high school students, local elected officials and community leaders
- Host a day-long forum on the state of engagement on your campus, what more can be done, and what can be done to strengthen existing efforts
- Send out a proposal to faculty for developing a course on youth and the political system and give out a course development grant to the best proposal
IMMIGRANT YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Applied Development Science has published a special issue on immigrant civic engagement. Two articles are by CIRCLE staff and three other articles are the products of CIRCLE grants. Following is a list of the articles included in the journal.


“South Florida’s Immigrant Youth and Civic Engagement: Major Engagement: Minor Differences” by Alex Stepick, Carol Dutton Stepick, and Yves Labissiere [research funded by CIRCLE]

“The Civic Engagement of Immigrant Youth: New Evidence From the 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation Survey” by Mark Hugo Lopez and Karlo Barrios Marcelo [CIRCLE staff]

“Immigrants’ Cultural Identities as Sources of Civic Engagement” by Lene Arnett Jensen [research funded by CIRCLE]


“Identities in Context: Politicized Racial Group Consciousness Among Asian American and Latino Youth” by Jane Junn and Natalie Masuoka [research funded by CIRCLE]