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"That's **not** Democracy."

How Out-of-School Youth Engage in Civic Life

& What Stands in Their Way

CIRCLE | AUGUST 2012

This report was written by Surbhi Godsay, Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, Abby Kiesa and Peter Levine, and is published in collaboration with the Charles F. Kettering Foundation.

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

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Section 1:

Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

A vibrant and thriving democracy requires a deeply engaged and active citizenry. "Civic engagement" encompasses all the ways we identify and understand common problems in our communities, nation, and world. Robust civic engagement not only creates healthy societies; it benefits the individuals who engage, through the development of skills and knowledge, networks and relationships, and feelings of purpose and meaning.

Survey data show that civic engagement is highly unequal among young Americans. One of the primary divisions is between young people who have ever attended college and those who dropped out of high school or did not continue their educations beyond high school (about 42 percent of the youth population in 2012). The college-attending population is much more civically engaged.

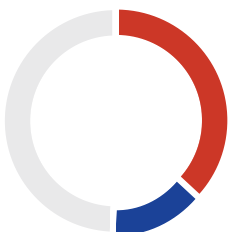
"Non-college youth" are highly diverse in terms of demographics, life circumstances, and levels of civic engagement, and some will go to college later. Still, studying them as a group is valuable because college attendance is a powerful predictor of engagement, and because strategies for engaging any population must take into account the institutions that can reach them. For college students and alumni, higher education provides institutional opportunities that are missing for all non-college youth. Participation in other institutions that may reach youth outside of formal educational settings—such as labor unions, political parties, and religious congregations—has steeply declined over the past half-century.

National survey data show that a majority of non-college youth are basically disengaged from civic life, with 37 percent completely disconnected, and only 13.5 percent engaged in forms of civic leadership. (Our model includes family and locally-based informal leadership, along with more traditionally recognized employment and organizational leadership.) But standardized survey questions may not capture the contributions and opinions of poor and working-class youth, who may find words like volunteering and civic engagement inapplicable or confusing, even though they may engage in their communities. Also, survey research is not ideal for determining why young people do or do not participate. Thus we chose to discuss civic engagement (without using that term) in semi-structured conversations with non-college youth. In all, we interviewed 121 non-college youth in 20 focus groups in 4 cities between fall 2008 and June 2010. Compared to the national population of non-college youth, participants in our study were much more likely to be urban and African American. In this report, we combine our own focus group data with national statistics and summaries of other relevant research.

In all the focus groups, with the exception of the first ones (in Baltimore), we began the conversations by asking in an open-ended way whether participants had "given back, helped their community, or tried to make positive change." A few individuals offered examples, but the most common response was silence. Sometimes the silence lasted 30 seconds or longer. That initial response reinforced the basic survey finding that non-college youth are not very engaged. Asking general questions about engagement in various ways did not elicit many more responses.

However, as the conversations proceeded, they provided evidence that the initial response was not the whole story:

- *Most participants saw concrete barriers to civic engagement.* For example, they perceived that institutions did not want their engagement, that their communities provided few positive role models and that they lacked the money and connections to contribute.



National survey data show that a majority of non-college youth are basically disengaged from civic life, with **37% completely disconnected,** and only **13.5% "broadly engaged"**

- *Many participants believed they had skills to make a difference in their communities, but they lacked opportunities to use those skills.*
- *Nevertheless, many participants served or helped other individuals in their own families and neighborhoods,* although they did not think of these forms of helping behavior when asked about community-level change.
- *Participants were highly aware of social and political issues,* concerned about them, and likely to discuss them critically in their own social networks, even if they did not see how they personally could address such issues.
- *A small minority of participants had been recruited into civic organizations, and they generally expressed strong support for these groups.* Most other focus group members believed that such institutions were missing in their communities and reported never having been asked to participate.

In addition to telling us about their civic engagement (or disengagement), the respondents also reflected on the various settings in which they had come of age. They had grown up in a nested set of contexts, including families and neighborhoods, as well as formal institutions like schools and workplaces. They reflected on whether those settings had promoted or discouraged their interests, motivations, and skills for civic engagement. In general, their opinions were highly distrustful and critical, although we uncovered some positive assessments, especially of family members.

Participation in other institutions that may reach youth outside of formal educational settings—such as labor unions, political parties, and religious congregations—has steeply declined over the past half-century.

Overall, this study finds that non-college young people lack organized and institutional opportunities to address large-scale social issues —reinforcing previous research. They often report helping individuals, and they discuss social issues in their own networks, but generally they do not connect these activities to making systemic or societywide changes.

We offer insights into promising strategies for reengaging poor and working-class young adults. Many respondents expressed interest in education for younger people (most often their own children or siblings), including both K-12 schooling and community-based opportunities. Recruiting

This study finds that non-college young people lack organized and institutional opportunities to address large-scale social issues

non-college youth into organizations that assist and improve education would be worthwhile. They felt that they owed the next generation help and guidance, and they personally valued making contributions. Opportunities to move from critical talk (which is common in their circles) to constructive collective action is the key to transforming both these individuals and their communities.

Section 2:

Introduction

INTRODUCTION:

Widespread civic participation is essential for sustaining a true democracy (see the classic study *Voice and Equality* by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady). Engagement during the adolescent and young-adult years is especially important, because it builds lasting habits and skills. Unfortunately, poor and working-class young adults demonstrate lower rates of civic engagement than their college-attending counterparts.

That gap probably reflects an accumulation of disadvantages in their communities, schools, and other institutions (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). For example, youth in less affluent high schools are exposed to fewer opportunities to learn civic habits and skills (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Kahne & Sporte, 2008). Those students are also much less likely to attend college, which would offer additional opportunities to learn and practice citizenship, and to be recruited into civic organizations.

Studying non-college youth is problematic for several reasons. First, this term is a negative definition, using a deficit as its basic criterion to describe people, even though they have knowledge, experience, and other assets.

Second, it is a very large category, encompassing enormous diversity. Non-college youth may have similar cultural and social backgrounds to some peers who are attending college, or who have some college experience. It is not obvious that generalizations about such a diverse group will be useful.

Third, if the underlying goal is to investigate and address inequality, studying non-college youth is problematic, because the non-college group does not align perfectly with disadvantaged youth. Some wealthy and powerful young people choose not to attend college. Some deeply disadvantaged people do enroll in college. And the most marginalized and oppressed young people have other problems, such as disabilities, incarceration, or criminal victimization. Therefore, college attendance is not always a meaningful boundary.

We nevertheless see compelling reasons to focus on the non-college category. They are almost invisible in a society whose formal leaders and opinion makers usually hold college degrees. For example, reporters routinely equate college students with young people as a whole. College attendance is a powerful predictor of civic engagement, even when controlling for other factors. Finally, policies and strategies for engaging people in civic life must consider the institutions that can reach them.

For people with college experience, higher education provides a powerful institutional base, subsidized by significant public funds, capable of reaching both current students and alumni. Many organizations are working to enhance the civic mission of higher education and have proposed policies to support that mission (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Their strategies and policy proposals are valuable, but cannot directly benefit non-college youth. The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools and its member organizations and allies are working to strengthen civic education in K-12 schools, but again, their efforts cannot help people who have left school without going on to college. Thus, from a policy perspective, it is important to understand how non-college youth participate in civic life and what new programs and institutions might enhance their engagement.

College attendance is strongly associated with demographic characteristics. Young people without college experience are not a cross-section of the youth population—they are more likely to be Latino or African American, male, unemployed, or residents of suburban or urban areas than those with college experience (Kiesa & Marcelo, 2009). Low levels of civic engagement among non-college youth translate into inequalities in political and civic participation by race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and geography, both now and in the future, as these youths age.

Non-college young people are underrepresented in groups, meetings, projects, and elections. Their underrepresentation has grown more severe over the last four decades. Consequently, communities miss the potential contributions of large numbers of youth , and the youth miss opportunities to be nurtured and shaped into active citizens. Not only do they lose political influence and the capacity to improve their own communities, they miss the chance to develop the skills, relationships, and psychological benefits (such as satisfaction and purpose) that have been found to enhance the odds of "thriving" in life (Lerner, 2004). The White House and several federal agencies have focused especially on the most disconnected segment of these non-college youth, the ones who are not involved with any educational institutions, jobs, or community groups. A major report by Belfield, Levin and Rosen (2012) coined the term opportunity youth for this group. They offer "opportunities" because both they and their whole communities would be much better off if they were reengaged.

Section 3:

Analysis & Findings

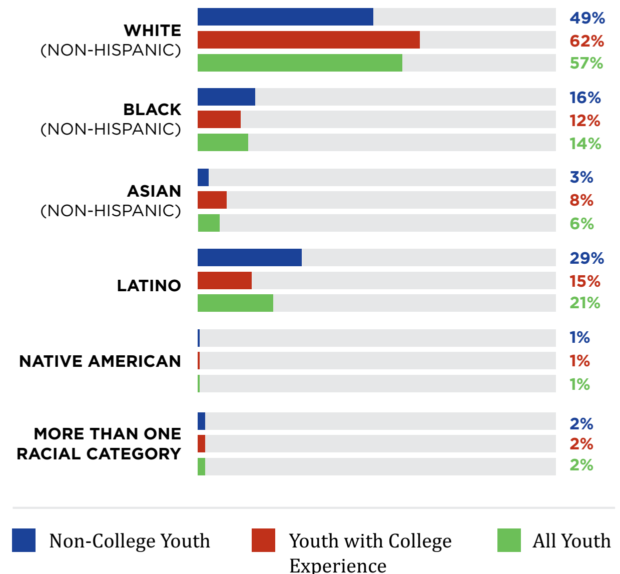
ANALYSIS & FINDINGS:

Who Are Youth with No College Experience?

For the purpose of this study, "non-college" youth are those between the ages of 18 and 29 who have not had any formal education beyond high school, including those who have dropped out of high school. In 2012, according to the Census Current Population March Survey as analyzed by CIRCLE, 42 percent of all Americans in that age range have no formal education beyond high school. Among those young people, 62 percent have attained high school diplomas.

In 2012, youth with no college experience are more likely than the overall youth population to be Latino (21 percent of all youth, 29 percent of non-college youth) and slightly more likely to be Black (14 percent of all youth, 16 percent of non-college youth). Youth who have no college experience are less likely to be White (57 percent of all youth, 49 percent of non-college youth) and Asian (6 percent of all youth, 3 percent of non-college youth). It is important to note that although young people of color are overrepresented among non-college youth, the largest group of non-college youth is White.

FIGURE 1:
YOUTH BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND RACE



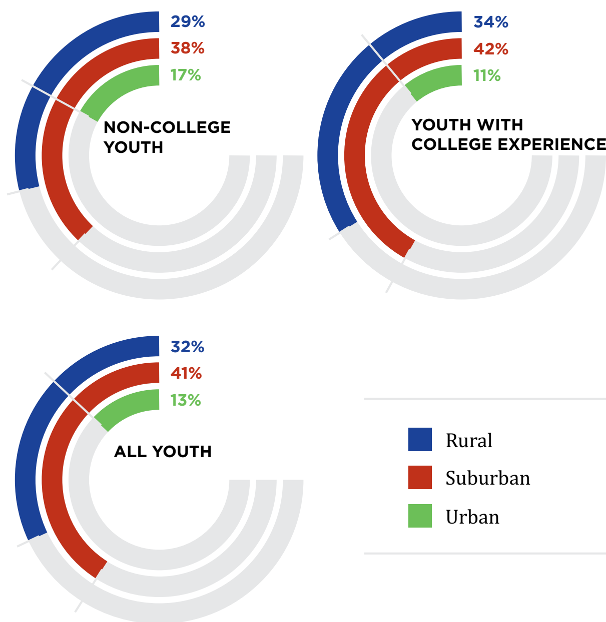
Source: CIRCLE analysis of Census March 2012 Current Population Survey (CPS)

This sub-set of young people is more likely than their peers to have their own children (27 percent of non-college youth, 17 percent of youth with any college experience). Additionally, and significant to our findings, youth without college experience are much more likely to be unemployed. The unemployment rate for youth with no college experience is more than twice the rate of their peers (19 percent vs. 8 percent)

The data from 2012 show that non-college youth are by no means all urban. The largest group live in the suburbs (38 percent), and rural youth are disproportionately represented in the non-college category (13 percent of all youth, 17 percent of non-college youth).

In 2012, according to the Census Current Population March Survey as analyzed by CIRCLE, 42 percent of all Americans 18- to-29 years-old have no formal education beyond high school. Among those young people, 62 percent have attained high school diplomas.

FIGURE 2:
URBANICITY BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Source: CIRCLE analysis of Census March 2012 Current Population Survey (CPS)

Although many factors influence the odds that an individual will attend college, family income is a prominent predictor. American children in the top quarter of the income distribution have an 80 percent chance of attending college while they are young adults, whereas young Americans whose families are in the bottom quarter of the income distribution have just a 19 percent chance of entering college (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011, p. 120). Average family income directly relates to both two-year college attendance and four-year college attendance (Akerhielm, Berger, Hooker, & Wise, 1998; Aughinbaugh, 2008).

The Research for This Report

CIRCLE's previous research, consistent with the larger body of scholarly literature, finds that the largest and most consistent gaps in civic engagement are related to formal educational experience. People with college experience are more likely to engage in a wide variety of ways, from voting to joining unions. In fact, according to Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry (1996, p. 31), the correlation between years of school and civic engagement is "the best documented finding in American political behavior research."

This finding derives in large part from surveys of formal civic behavior. To examine this issue more fully, qualitative investigation is also important. Non-college youth might be engaged in ways that the standard surveys overlook. Also, it is not fully evident *why* years of formal education should predict civic engagement. That is not the case in other countries, such as India, where low-caste and poor citizens are more likely than middle-class citizens to vote (Pushpendra, 1999). Thus, it is important to find out more about the barriers to civic engagement for Americans who have fewer years of schooling and to look for alternate paths to being engaged that do not include college.

Our population of interest was non-college youth, but qualitative research is stronger when it is focused. We drew our interview samples of young people without college experience from low-income neighborhoods in certain US cities clustered in the Northeast and the South. Participants were predominantly but not exclusively African American. The background research that we cite in this report covers other youth as well and helps put our findings in context.

In 2008, CIRCLE began organizing conversations with youth who were between the ages of 18 and 25 and had never been in college, as well as nonprofits that reach out to these youth. In total we conducted 20 focus groups in four cities: Baltimore, Maryland (Fall 2008); Little Rock, Arkansas (June 2010); Lowell, Massachusetts (April 2010); and Richmond, Virginia (April/May 2010). These cities were selected largely because partners of CIRCLE work with youth there, including the Hip Hop Caucus Education Fund, the League of Young Voters Education Fund, and United Teen Equality Center. Our partners assisted with recruitment for a small number of focus groups, which consisted mostly of youth who were not involved in these organizations. Primarily, youth were identified through market research firms that have access to databases of people in these communities. Youth participants received monetary incentives for participating, and each group lasted 90 minutes to 2 hours and took place in the community where the youth live.

> The largest and most consistent gaps in civic engagement are related to formal educational experience.

Of the focus group participants, 69 percent identified as Black, while 17 percent said they were White, three percent

Latino/Hispanic, and two percent Asian. At the time the focus groups were conducted, nearly half (47 percent) were not employed, 30 percent were employed full-time, and 17 percent worked part-time. 88 percent of the focus group participants were single and had never been married, while four percent were married, three percent were living with a partner as married, and three percent were separated.

CIRCLE conducted a comprehensive literature review, exploring the factors that affect the civic engagement of non-college youth. Based on CIRCLE's familiarity with the focus groups and the literature review, we developed a coding scheme to analyze the audio and transcript data. Two CIRCLE coders achieved an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability through an iterative process of listening to and coding audio and transcript data. CIRCLE used a collaborative approach to analyzing the coded data and developing this narrative.

Overview: Civic Engagement Among Youth by College Experience

Although this study emphasizes qualitative information, this section sets the context by citing survey research that depicts serious gaps in civic engagement by educational attainment and social class.

Civic engagement is measured in various ways, but for our purposes it includes both community and political engagement (whether formal or informal). Some of the discrete acts that are classically understood as civic engagement include voting, volunteering, attending meetings, and joining voluntary associations.

We found that youth with no college experience were more likely to be completely disengaged from civic life. In November 2011, CIRCLE released a study based on data from the Census Current Population Supplement (CPS), a national, annual survey that now asks a substantial battery of questions about civic engagement. Using cluster analysis, we identified five groups of young people (here defined as 18-to 29-year-olds) who showed distinctive patterns of engagement or disengagement (Kawashima-Ginsberg & CIRCLE, 2011).

- The *Civically Alienated* were almost completely disengaged from civic and political life
- *Talkers* were defined by their frequent communication about civic and political issues, but did not take action
- The *Undermobilized* were registered to vote in 2010 (manifesting a certain degree of connection and interest) but did not vote that year
- *Political Specialists* were mainly involved in activities connected to elections
- The *Broadly Engaged* were involved in several different aspects of community and political life and were disproportionately likely to be leaders
- The *Donors* gave money but did little else

Youth with no college experience were more than twice as likely as their college-attending peers to be found in the Civically Alienated cluster. But non-college youth were relatively likely to be Talkers, so programs and projects that

This report contains several thematic sections and components.

The next section will analyze survey data to show the participation gaps that inspired this qualitative research. In each section that follows, our focus group findings will serve as an entry point into a particular thematic area, and then we will summarize previous research to provide readers with a deeper understanding of the dynamics and context.

Additionally, to provide examples for how youth are engaging in civic life, four organizational profiles are included in the report as snapshots. We hope to show how organizations (both local and national) engage youth in civic life. CIRCLE interviewed staff of these organizations to learn about their developmental models and theories of change; the content of the interviews was used to create profiles. The four organizations— the YouthBuild model, The Family Partnership, Civic Justice Corps, and the League of Young Voters Education Fund—are diverse in terms of location and strategies. Most seek to better the lives of their constituents in various ways, and not only to engage them in civic life. They vary in terms of how they promote youth engagement within their organizations.

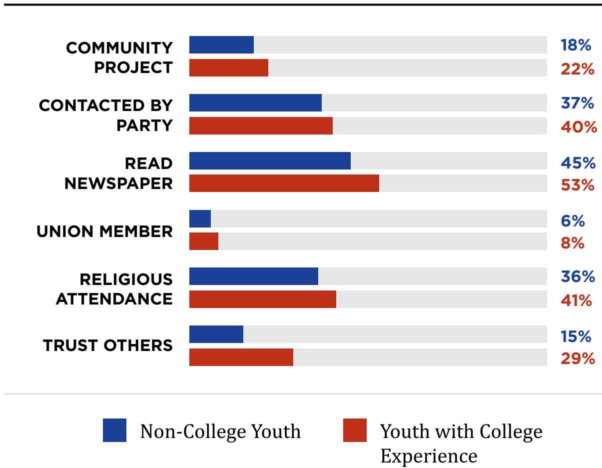
involve discussion and that connect discussion to action may be particularly appropriate for non-college youth.

Table 1: Youth Civic Engagement Clusters by Education (2010)

	Any College Experience	No College Experience
Civically Alienated	14.6%	35.7%
Broadly Engaged	26.7%	13.5%
Political Specialists	20.3%	13.6%
Undermobilized	13.6%	13.7%
Talkers	12.4%	13.8%
Donors	12.4%	9.7%

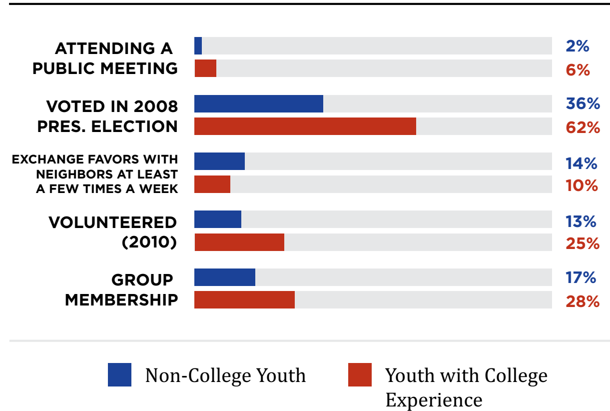
These groups were identified using a statistical technique called cluster analysis, which examines a pattern of engagement across multiple indicators. A different approach is to examine differences in levels of engagement for one indicator at a time. Figure 3 displays differences in measures of civic engagement for college-educated and non-college youth during the 2000's (combining the data from that whole decade). For each of these 10 forms of engagement, including union membership, college-educated youth are more involved than their counterparts who have never attended college.

FIGURE 3:
INDICATORS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



Source: CIRCLE analysis of General Social Survey data, combined data 2000-2010

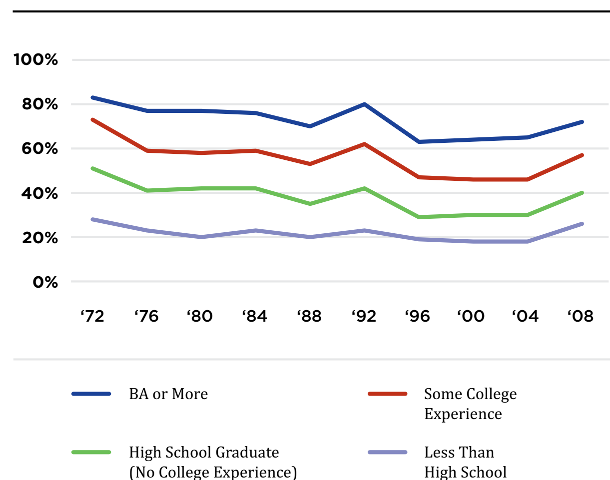
FIGURE 4:
INDICATORS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



Source: CIRCLE analysis of 2010 Census Current Population Survey (CPS) September Volunteering Supplement & November Voting & Registration Supplement & November Civic Engagement Supplement

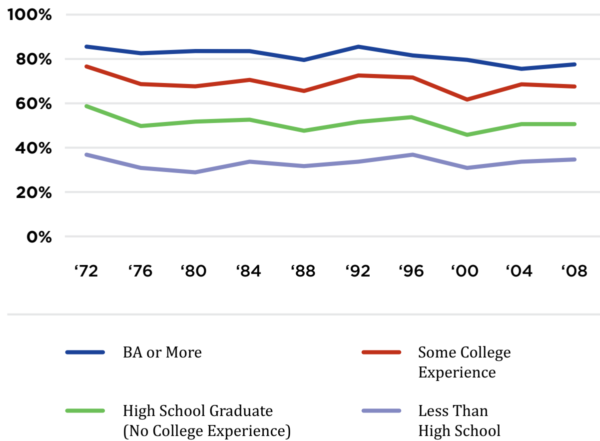
Voting is a particularly conspicuous form of civic engagement that has been measured consistently over time. Youth turnout varies by election, but the gaps in turnout by educational experience are constant (see Figure 5). Because voter registration is a precursor to voting, it is no surprise that registration rates also differ greatly by education (see Figure 6). Passage of Motor Voter legislation in 1993 (which allowed citizens to register at departments of motor vehicles) was not followed by an increase in turnout, nor by a substantial narrowing of the voting and registration gaps.

FIGURE 5:
YOUTH VOTER TURNOUT IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Source: CIRCLE analysis of Census Current Population Survey (CPS) November Voting & Registration Supplement (1972-2008)

FIGURE 6:
YOUTH VOTER REGISTRATION IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

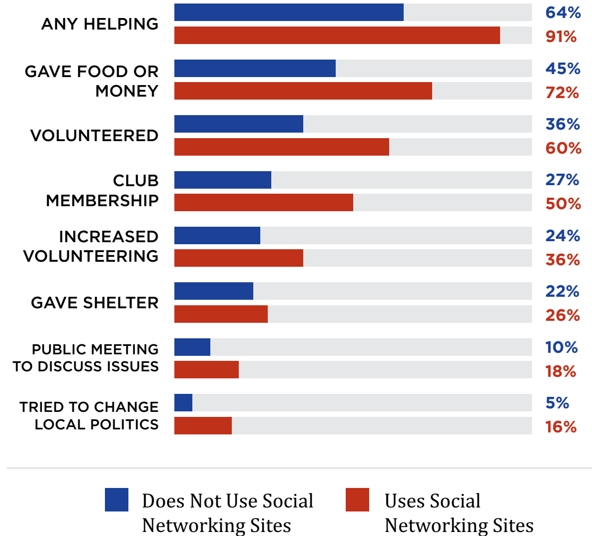


Source: CIRCLE analysis of Census Current Population Survey (CPS) November Voting & Registration Supplement (1972-2008)

So far, we have reviewed forms of civic engagement that show a consistent pattern: non-college youth lag far behind their peers who have any college experience. But some elements of young people's civic/political lives are not regularly measured. As a result of our preliminary qualitative research, questions about helping neighbors and providing food or shelter in one's home were added to the 2009 national Civic Health Index survey (*America's civic health index: Civic health in hard times,* 2009) That survey showed that education and income were not strongly related to those behaviors. In fact, non-college youth may be more likely than college youth to help neighbors and to provide food and shelter.

Technology and online activities have clearly transformed civic engagement and are sometimes seen as democratizing agents. Once an individual is online, the barriers to participation in any particular site or group are often low. Figure 7 shows that use of social media correlates with various forms of engagement. In the 2009 survey that generated this graph, civic uses of social-networking sites were common across income and educational gaps. Low-income youth and youth without college experience were nearly as likely to use social-networking sites for civic purposes as youth who had higher income or college experience (*America's civic health index: Civic health in hard times,* 2009)

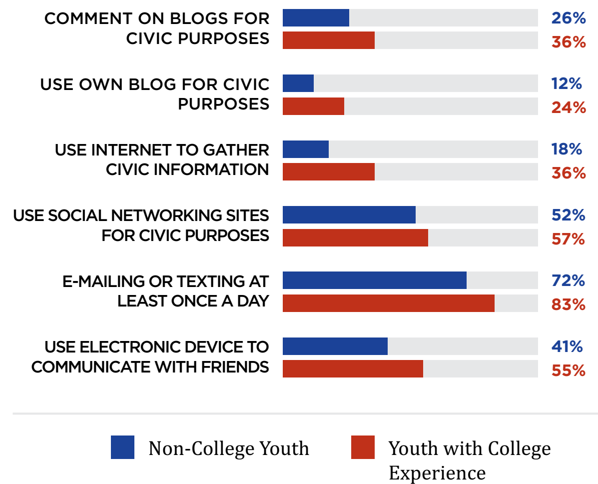
FIGURE 7:
ONLINE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG MILLENNIALS BY SOCIAL-NETWORKING SITE USAGE



Source: America's Civic Health Index: Civic Health in Hard Times (2009). National Conference on Citizenship, Washington, DC

On the other hand, access to the Internet remains unequal, and as a result, college youth are more likely to participate in many forms of civic engagement online.

FIGURE 8:
ONLINE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG 18-29 YEAR-OLDS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Source: CIRCLE analysis of National Conference on Citizenship Civic Health Index data, 2009

Initial Response: Little Engagement at the Community Level or for Social Change

As noted above, surveys show that the majority of non-college youth have low levels of civic engagement. One advantage of qualitative research is that we were not limited to using any particular word or phrase (such as volunteering or engagement, as a survey might be) that might lack cultural resonance—or might not even make sense—in the communities where we conducted our research. Instead, we asked in general about any ways that participants had given back, helped their communities, or tried to make positive change. (The resonances of the phrase giving back for African American inner-city youth have been explored by Charles [2005].)

The response was sometimes a lapse of complete silence. We tried many ways of asking the question and different phrases, but still there were notably few responses.

The silence that greeted our questions about engagement does not demonstrate that participants in our focus groups were apathetic or otherwise lacked motivation to participate. Many empirical studies (e.g., Dawes & Larson, 2011; Youniss & Metz, 2005) find that when young people are drawn into settings where civic engagement is encouraged, they develop motivations, confidence, and habits to participate, even if they were not so inclined before. In fact, the civic institutions that recruited large numbers of non-college youth in the mid-20th century, such as labor unions, churches, and political parties, did not rely on individuals to join for pre-existing civic reasons. Rather, they recruited participants by offering various incentives, and then inculcated civic motives in their recruits. Likewise, in the 1800s, John Stewart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville saw jury service as paradigmatic of civic education, because jurors were compelled to participate, but then developed motives, skills, and connections that kept them engaged (de Tocqueville, 1835/1841, pp. 307-314; Mill, 1869, p. 122). Today, jurors who successfully reach verdicts in trials trust their fellow citizens more, and are more likely to vote in regular elections, than similar peers who have not served as jurors (Gastil, Deess, Wiser, & Simmons, 2010). The jury is an example of an institution that turns inactive citizens into active citizens.

Thus, the most important factor in explaining low levels of engagement may not be apathy, but an absence of opportunity and recruitment.

Thus, the most important factor in explaining low levels of engagement may not be apathy, but an absence of opportunity and recruitment. A male respondent in Lowell said explicitly, "I usually volunteer when people ask me to volunteer, and I never turned it down." But few participants in our focus groups had been drawn into groups or organizations that might require activity or instill participatory values. One female respondent in Baltimore, who had worked for a political campaign, recalled, "I said yeah because they were paying, but I also needed something else to do like in my spare time, and that would keep my time occupied, for—for the, for the amount of—or month that I was going out polling. Got to meet new people and learn different things about different stuff." That was an example of being offered an incentive to participate in a civic activity, but it was rare.

Many respondents explicitly saw the lack of institutionalized opportunities as a barrier to participation. A man in Little Rock said,

> *"It's just so weird how like, people look at Little Rock and say 'Wow, Little Rock like this' [referring to serious social problems] but yet all of us at this table couldn't even name an opportunity where we were asked to do something for our community. ... It don't add up in my opinion."*

Another male participant in Little Rock simply noted, "I ain't never been asked to help the community, I ain't never helped the community, I ain't never been around nobody."

When participants reported that they had heard about opportunities to participate in community affairs, they cited diverse sources, such as friends, the Internet, radio, fliers, church, and a community center. Most of these announcements were about contributing time or money. Few respondents said that they had acted on such public announcements.

Many of the youth we interviewed had never been personally asked to participate, although research suggests that being personally and explicitly asked is an important

Organizational Profile: League of Young Voters Education Fund

www.youngvoter.org

The League of Young Voters Education Fund (LYVEF) runs a non-partisan electoral program. They say that their "integrated youth civic engagement model combines best practices from community, campus and cultural organizing with sophisticated voter engagement techniques. By focusing on relevant local issues like juvenile justice, green jobs, access to education and healthcare and organizing around climate change, we are engaging and mobilizing new and drop-off voters who would otherwise not be active in off election years."[1]

Youth-Development Model	
The outcomes (knowledge, skills and experiences) that the organization wants its young participants to develop	Because youth participate with LYVEF in diverse ways, the outcomes vary. Registering to vote and understanding the importance of voting are objectives for all youth who interact with LYVEF's volunteers. Further participation focuses on a deeper understanding of how civic engagement works and how to build power for the people in one's community. Youth in apprenticeships and the ones who take on staff roles develop even more knowledge and skills in community organizing, analyzing voting data, and managing volunteers.
The opportunities for youth to develop these outcomes within the organization	In four states, LYVEF has affiliate sites where youth are staff, and in several other states youth hold apprenticeships and serve as lead organizers (and are potential new staff members). Youth volunteer and plan and run events related to specific issue campaigns and elections. With longer participation, youth take on leadership roles in local efforts and become organizers with the staff. LYVEF also focuses on cultural organizing with events that build community and awareness (such as the Put the Guns Down Festival in Milwaukee). Young people can also participate in campaigns and events online.
Trainings, lessons, or a curriculum that guide youth work	In addition to the experiential training element built into LYVEF's work, it offers a two-level system of training. The first level is the Tunnel Builder Institute, which is a two-day, local "movement-building training." It is intended to be inspirational, and connects cultural themes to community-organizing concepts. Simulations are a core element, to show how people would solve hypothetical problems. Participants learn ideas and skills, such as how to build a campaign or design organizing materials. LYVEF also tries to be a "wrap-around program," providing a wide range of opportunities for each participant. Leaders of the organization try to build a culture that emphasizes getting to know participants, and combines personal development with civic engagement. The Tunnel Builder Institute has a component focused on personal development as a way of becoming a better organizer and improving one's own life.

[1] http://theleague.com/about/

How young people get involved	Youth find out about LYVEF in many ways, mostly peer-to-peer, through friends. In addition, volunteers and staff canvass (at Departments of Motor Vehicles and malls, for example) and hold events to build awareness and involvement. Since LYVEF affiliates build strong local networks, partner organizations sometimes suggest potential leaders (in an informal way). LYVEF also holds national online actions and live-streamed video events. Youth who participate identify as Leaguers, but do not live in a city with an organized program.
At what point youth "graduate" or leave the organization	LYVEF does not have a formal graduation or end to participation, in part because it seeks to maintain local networks. At the state and national level, youth generally "age out" of leadership and move to other progressive organizations. In local sites, participants tend to stay around but become alumni and "elders."

Overall Change Strategy	
Overall impact and change that the organization seeks	LYVEF is trying to create powerful movements in low-income communities led by low-income youth. On a local level, the organization builds power by educating young people who are low-income to have a voice and to understand political process.
Strategies that the organization uses to make this impact	Building a share of the vote in specific geographic areas while maintaining a presence after each election through issue organizing, lobbying, and writing to elected officials.
Why youth?	LYVEF focuses on young people for two main reasons: historically, social-change movements have been led by young people, and youth bring new ideas, and if civically engaged, would move closer to policies that benefit youth.

Not being asked not only leaves young people out, but it can lower their sense of efficacy or perceived ability to affect the world.

precondition of action for many people (e.g., Green & Gerber, 2008). This was particularly the case among young men in our focus groups. Not being asked not only leaves young people out, but it can lower their sense of efficacy or perceived ability to affect the world. Later, we consider other reasons for their low efficacy, which was palpable in statements like when a male participant in Baltimore said, “People like me don’t change things.”

If respondents had been asked to participate, the request was much more likely to be a hyper-local opportunity to volunteer, raise money, or donate materials, rather than a chance to participate in community problem solving, or anything related to politics or public policy. Some respondents explicitly noted a lack of opportunities to discuss and collaborate at the community level (as opposed to individually helping another person), like a female participant in Baltimore who said:

> *“It may make a difference if a couple of neighbors form a meeting, and you actually had a petition or something that can make a neighborhood better, but there’s not any outlets like that that we hear about.”*

Sometimes they were critical of the requests they did receive, seeing them as superficial. For instance a young woman in Baltimore said, “But I also think they have to realize that we are growing adults. We are not kids. You can’t like [show] us something colorful and shiny and catch our attention with it.”

Often requests came from older women with personal connections to our respondents, and less frequently from churches. Participants expressed conflicting opinions about whether Facebook and other social media would be useful tools to engage people in civic activities. Their uncertainty and disagreement may result from the fact that no one had experienced this sort of outreach or participation.

Impediments to Civic Engagement

Participants in our focus groups listed numerous barriers that prevented them from participating in their communities, two prominent examples being lack of opportunities and financial instability. Violence, gang-related issues, police harassment, and feelings of inefficacy and alienation were also barriers that prevented them from being engaged.

Many described their own neighborhoods as facing problems that were daunting. For example, one male respondent in Richmond said, “It’s hard by me wakin’ up every morning—I’m hearin’ gun shots, I’m seeing somebody get shot, I’m seeing somebody get robbed. So how can I actually do right if that’s all I’m wakin’ up to? It’s goin’ be hard to change the community. If that’s all they see everyday. ...There’s too much negative in communities, too much.”

Participants frequently reported that a combination of violence and police harassment prevented youth from going out into the community and created feelings of alienation. Previous research has found that the scale of social problems in some low-income urban neighborhoods can discourage youths from acting civically. Rubin and Hayes (2010) suggest that the catch-22 of experiencing severe problems while feeling powerless to act against them” creates a sense of “disjuncture” and a lack of agency (p. 369).

Some respondents gave the impression that they constantly felt on edge, unsafe because of who they were or how they were perceived—or a combination of both. A young man in Richmond reflected that,

> *“They see tattoos, you know what I’m sayin’...they think you a killa, or a...you know what I’m sayin’. They’re just. ...And I see plenty of Caucasian people with tattoos all over their bodies and they got jobs.”*

A lifetime of experiencing negative stereotypes can cause youth of color to have internalized anxiety related to how they are perceived, which is exacerbated by negative race-related cues in their environment (Steele & Aronson, 1995). The fear of conforming to a stereotype or being judged in light of that stereotype often results in negative psychological and health outcomes. Furthermore, anxiety related to being in a stereotyped group has been associated with underperformance on academic assessments (Steele, 1997). Additionally, individuals who experience racism are more likely to have suffer from distress, depression, and anxiety and have decreased levels of life satisfaction (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). Racial stressors are

also associated with higher levels of hypertension among African Americans (Williams & Neighbors, 2001).

Several predicted that no one would respond to their call for action, and that they would be criticized for not being well enough organized to lead others.

Participants suggested that they often had to shift into a protective mode and felt mental stress, like the young man in Richmond who said, "For me, I done develop the mind, and I know it's not true, but I develop the mind that just about everywhere I go whether I like it or not, there's going to be a gun. ... Wherever I go I think there's a gun. ... For instance, when we walk out this door, somebody on this strip that is not a police officer have a gun. ... That's just me and my mindset because of what I been through."

"If there was an organization around here that I felt catered to the needs and stuff from my neighborhood then I wouldn't mind joining, I wouldn't mind going to the park and cleaning up and stuff like that, if we had something like that it wouldn't be no problem. "

Moreover, many participants (most often young men) did not see themselves as people who could or should be listened to. Their expectation that others would dismiss their efforts often created a sense of inefficacy. One male participant in Richmond said, "You can't help a community that they don't want you in." Several predicted that no one would respond to their call for action, and that they would be criticized for not being well enough organized to lead others. In reflecting on their experience in school, some respondents felt that the students who were going to have influence in the future were the ones who were on track for college.

Many participants argued that they would need financial stability in order to participate in their communities, but that was out of reach in the current economy. "This conversation would be totally different if we all had jobs," one male in Richmond said—but jobs were scarce, as another man added: "You'd be lucky if you stumbled across a summer job." A lack of money also emerged as a barrier for engagement in this comment from a young man in Little Rock: "Because it does take money, and without the money, I don't see it, I don't really see it happening, we're just people saying 'let's do this' [but unable actually to accomplish anything significant]."

Sometimes respondents explained that they could not make a difference in their communities because their lack of employment and financial instability would undermine their efforts to lead others. A male participant in Richmond said:

> *I mean, I know I could push and try to do things in the community but it's like—ain't no use because I ain't even got myself together yet. I can't be out here trying to change the world. ... I can't be doin' that because I ain't got nothin'. ... If I'm goin' out there sayin', "People, y'all should do this, y'all should do that," people gonna look at me like, "Man, what he got? What he doin'? What he got to show for what he talkin' 'bout?"*

In another focus group, this exchange occurred amongst female participants in Little Rock:

> **Person 1:** *I like helpin'.... You have to give, but you have to look at yourself before you can help others.*
> **Moderator:** *What do you mean?*
> **Person 1:** *Like you have to look at yourself, like...*
> **Person 2:** *You gotta help yourself before you can help somebody else.*
> **Person 1:***If you're not doin' nothing positive you can't go out and tell somebody else to do something because they're not going to listen to you.*

One respondent in Richmond cited both a lack of money and a dearth of local organizations and recruitment as reasons that he could not undertake ambitious civic action, although he was a role-model for children:

> *The main issue is just money, like, we don't have the money to go help, so right now the only thing I can do is all the little kids from my neighborhood, little cousins, family members, I just try to help them and be positive, be that positive dude around, that's basically all I can do right now. If there was an organization*

> *around here that I felt catered to the needs and stuff from my neighborhood then I wouldn't mind joining, I wouldn't mind going to the park and cleaning up and stuff like that, if we had something like that it wouldn't be no problem.*

Many described a lack of positive civic role models as a barrier to engagement. In fact, the lack of role models often emerged in a different context as well: when respondents were asked to name a significant social issue in their neighborhoods. Some connected the absence of role models to their own lack of civic skills, explaining that they wouldn't know how to go about making broader social change because they didn't have any positive examples from their communities to show them how. The closest examples were Barack Obama and various celebrities; however, they mentioned several times that they didn't have anyone locally who could be a mentor or positive role model for them.

In most cases, however, the people they viewed as positive role models were not political leaders, but wealthy individuals who had helped others meet material needs

Some respondents suggested that the role models they did have, the "leaders" of the neighborhoods or blocks, were actually negative models. A male participant in Little Rock said, "A lot of what I notice is in the 'hood areas: the drug dealers got all the money, the cars; the children are like, 'I wanna be like him'; they don't have nobody to show them different." Reflecting back on their adolescence, some said they had viewed these people as role models because they had influence, or for financial reasons (e.g., they had a car or lots of money), including this young man in Little Rock:

> *[Children] look up to the people that sell drugs, the people with money … instead of the police and government. ... I mean, we're not goin' listen to, I mean, we probably might listen to, like, Barack Obama, but I would rather listen to him [a local person with money] because I see him every day, I know where he come from, my Mom know him since he was little, I seen where he got, how to get there, so I want to do that. But we should use him as an example of what we don't want to be, where we don't want to go, and other than just lockin' him up for life and not having no influence on our side of the world, we should use that influence our community and our youth to be better than that.*

The above mention of President Obama was far from unique. Several youth mentioned him by name, noting that he was a model because he had been elected as a Black man. A few expressed trust that he would work hard for them because he had (they said) grown up in a similar neighborhood, with a similar socioeconomic status.

In most cases, however, the people they viewed as positive role models were not political leaders, but wealthy individuals who had helped others meet material needs after overcoming the same obstacles that the respondents had faced, such as financial hardships. Often cited were national figures (e.g., Oprah) and musicians (Alicia Keys, Wyclef, T.I.), who had used their resources or music to raise money or give back in some way. Some youth did name people in their lives who they believed were role models because of how they had helped people, and these individuals were often parents or grandmothers.

In our view, it's more important what was not said: few youth talked about people who were consistently active in their communities, and even fewer mentioned people who organized communities or were politically engaged. One male respondent in Little Rock acknowledged that some individuals might be consistently active in the community, but their work was invisible:

> *My pastor, he's workin' with the community, because he started a food drive. You know, but after that food drive, he goes back to doing what he normally does. You know, it's not like that he just works for the community like, that he tries to better the community for himself. It's just like, he does this once a year, he may do other things throughout the year as far as like food drives for Thanksgiving, and you know, to the shelter for homeless folks, Christmas, around Christmas time whatever, but as far as that, or anything else, we don't really tend to see stuff.*

Although a handful of participants did talk about role models in community-based organizations, they mostly referred to the staff of a community center (such as a Boys & Girls Club) who had provided positive examples and something for kids to do.

Daniel Hart and colleagues have identified a factor that reduces the number of role models and the amount of recruitment in many low-income urban areas: a lack of adults (Hart, Atkins, Markey & Youniss, 2004). As Hart and Atkins (2002, p. 235) put it, "urban communities have too few adults to provide urban youth with the full range of teams and clubs that facilitates development." The authors

Organizational Profile: The Family Partnership (a member of the Alliance for Children and Families)

thefamilypartnership.org

The Alliance for Children and Families is a national membership association of nonprofit human service providers in the United States and Canada. Motivated by a vision of a healthy society and strong communities, the Alliance strengthens the capacities of North America's nonprofit child- and family-serving organizations to serve and advocate for children, families, and communities. The nearly 350 members of the Alliance provide an array of community-based programs and services to all generations, serving close to 3.4 million people each year. More information is available at alliance1.org. "Through counseling, education programs and advocacy, The Family Partnership supports families in need and empowers them to solve their problems."[2]

Youth-Development Model	
The outcomes (knowledge, skills and experiences) that the organization wants its young participants to develop	The Family Partnership seeks to identify future leaders, meet them where they are, and, by offering them opportunities to participate, develop their confidence to influence change. It teaches them leadership skills so they can organize their communities on their own. The outcomes that The Family Partnership's staff seek are mostly traditional community-organizing skills, with an emphasis on culturally specific community outreach.
The opportunities for youth to develop these outcomes within the organization	The Family Partnership runs 8-12 one-week-long classes for young people, introducing participants to thinking about themselves as agents of community change. If people want to be involved, they can continue with a more rigorous curriculum lasting 26 weeks. Young people can also get involved in MOVE (Mobilizing and Organizing for Victory and Empowerment), a broad community group that holds quarterly meetings. Committees within MOVE work on various community issues.
Trainings, lessons, or a curriculum that guide youth work	A cohort of students studies and discusses material in class and conducts activities as "homework." The content of the multi-week classes is culturally specific, most often geared towards the Latino and Somali immigrant communities. The class first focuses on very basic organizing skills (e.g., knowing how issues affect individuals and groups, the concept of self-interest, and accountability) and participants get homework (e.g., to do a one-on-one conversation). At end of the class, students develop and complete a project. Skills and knowledge addressed in the classes include how laws are made in the state, how to run a public meeting, power-analysis, and creating an action plan.
How young people get involved	The Family Partnership provides a range of services and opportunities, and staff bring youth into the organizing trainings. Sometimes the organizers already work with parents in an adult leadership class. They also go to high schools, community centers, and meetings to spread the word about the classes.

[2] http://thefamilypartnership.org

At what point youth “graduate” or leave the organization	Most often, participants get involved in the 8- to 12-week class, and then get involved in community actions beyond what is required in the curriculum and continue organizing on their own. Their work supports The Family Partnership as well as other organizations, depending on the issue the youth are interested in.

Overall Change Strategy	
Overall impact and change that the organization seeks	The Family Partnership wants to build new leaders within communities, so that those in positions of power at the local, state, and national level represent all communities. They aim to create leaders with a lifelong commitment to justice, change, and equity.
Strategies that the organization uses to make this impact	Members of the Alliance for Children and Families are encouraged to embrace principles of representation and authentic voice in their civic engagement work and organizational governance. A focus is placed on integrating the analysis of race and class when considering and discussing issues.
Why youth?	Young people are central members of the communities in which The Family Partnership works, but they often do not get asked to participate or have a voice in community conversations. The youth organizers believe that young people have more reasons to participate (e.g., as a way to learn English) and more optimism and hope to make change than adults in the same communities, who may be jaded.

compare impoverished Camden, New Jersey with a nearby wealthy suburb and find that the latter has more than 1.5 times as many adults per child.

Specific Civic Skills, but Few Opportunities to Use Them

Civic skills—such as communication, coordinating people and projects, and critical thinking—are tools used by members of a community to address its problems. They can be learned in many venues, including home, work, school, and through local associations and unions, which used to teach many working-class Americans their civic skills. The decline of these associations and unions has decreased young people's opportunities to learn civic skills. In addition, young people who live in less affluent school districts are less likely to be provided with the classes where they might learn necessary skills to participate in civic life. Finally, youth who have no experience with college lack opportunities to be trained in new fields, to recognize and describe their own skills, and to use those skills in ways that would appeal to employers.

When we asked about skills, there was almost always a pause, and often respondents had a hard time even recognizing their own skills. Once conversation started, they were able to identify how they could contribute, but this was not easy for them, and it appeared that they had not previously recognized their own skills that could contribute to making positive change.

Often participants cited a skill for communication, such as being able to make a persuasive argument, convince their friends to do something, listen well, or discuss issues. Other skills that were mentioned related to personal interests, such as making music, which they felt had been a useful tool in engaging people in participating in voting or service. Only a few respondents had actually used skills to organize a group to participate in a civic act.

Nevertheless, Helping Behavior Is Common

As noted above, when asked how they had contributed in positive ways to their communities or exercised civic skills, respondents were often at a loss. It wasn't until much later in several of the conversations that it emerged that they had let someone stay at their home or given someone on their street groceries. They saw such acts as normal parts of their lifestyle, rather than ways of making positive change.

Assisting Others in Informal Contexts ("Neighboring")

Volunteering was very rare in our sample, but "volunteering" often means official programs or projects that use unpaid labor. Many respondents reported having a positive impact on other individuals in ways that they did not count as volunteering, such as sheltering peers in their own homes, or acting intentionally as role models. These activities may be relatively rare among college students and college graduates. One young woman in Baltimore recalled:

Many respondents reported having a positive impact on other individuals in ways that they did not count as volunteering, such as sheltering peers in their own homes, or acting intentionally as role models.

> *I know I have an impact on a lot of people's lives, because I could say, I am a child that came from someone who was, you know, on drugs, who I had been, like my whole life was like totally messed up. I'm not going to say my life is not messed up now, but it's like, I come a long way from where I used to be to where I am now, so it's like, like this girl, she's going through so many things I have went through, and I can like say, I be like, I went through that, give you advice, you know what I'm saying? Take it or don't take it. Like, I have let her into my home even though I stay in, we living in a room, you know, and she still stayed with me. So it was like I was making an impact on her life because I helped her in a lot of things, you know, volunteered my services to her, I volunteered my food to her, my home, you know, stuff like that.*

Because of its duration and intensity, this was an unusual example, but helping other individuals was fairly common. Several respondents had allowed strangers or people they knew to sleep on their couch or had given them food. These behaviors were often motivated by the feeling that the individual would want the act reciprocated if he or she faced the same situation, although in a few instances, respondents mentioned helping others because they saw a grandmother, mother, or another family member do so, or they were asked to help by a trusted person from

their close network. As one young man in Baltimore said, "The only thing that really would make me do something probably is my family or people that I know."

Many respondents still gave back in this way despite having mistrust for some of their fellow community members. For example, they expressed doubt that people asking for money in their city were really homeless, although that kind of situation could elicit complex feelings, like those of this male participant in Baltimore:

> *You know, that person may not really be homeless, but they really may be homeless. And if they need a dollar, that dollar can get them something to eat or something like that, and if I am homeless, I would want somebody to give me a dollar.*

On several occasions, respondents said they trusted a certain individual in their community while mistrusting the idea of "community" or the community as a whole.

Some respondents described participating in civic activities through church. They often participated because a trusted family member had asked them to participate or attend with them, and not necessarily because they trusted the church itself. In some cases, youth felt a strong mistrust for church and how it would use their donated money.

Previous research also finds that urban youth without college experience participate in ways other than volunteering and engaging through formal institutions. "Neighboring" is defined as "acts of care for neighbors that do not occur through an organization or as a result of friendship" (Bolland & McCallum, 2002; Silverman, 1986; Wuthnow, 1998, as cited in McBride, Sherraden & Pritzker, 2004, p. 2). The 2009 Civic Health Index found that while adults with college experience were "about twice as likely to have engaged" in traditional ways such as volunteering, those without college experience were more likely to have participated in giving food, money, or shelter (America's civic health index: Civic health in hard times, 2009) . Neighboring among urban youth has also been documented by qualitative researchers, who include activities such as "providing temporary care for the children of neighbors, providing housing for homeless individuals and families, and providing food, money, clothes, guidance, and encouragement to others" (Mattis, et al., 2009, p. 5).

Moreover, scholars suggest that neighboring provides a developmental base for civic attitudes, and predicts participation in other community activities (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; McBride, Sherraden & Pritzker, 2006). Young people have been shown to express higher levels of commitment to civic participation when they feel a "general sense that the neighborhood supported young people," a sense that can be generated by acts of neighboring (Kahne & Sporte, 2008, p. 20). In the 1970s, Solomon and Steinitz (1979, p. 56) showed that neighborly actions among low-income populations tended to be characterized as "simple decency, rather than expressions of more abstract social goals." The authors found that people living in urban neighborhoods tended to feel disconnected from formal politics or political engagement, despite their participation in actions like joining picket lines, persuading neighborhood friends to design a new playground, and so on. Rather than characterizing these acts as political, respondents saw them as ways of "improv[ing] conditions in their own realms of reality" (Solomon and Steinitz, 1979, p. 56).

The most frequently cited civic activity was trying to serve as a role model for younger people.

Serving as Role Models for Younger People

The most frequently cited civic activity was trying to serve as a role model for younger people. Participants often seemed to look back on high school as a different time in their lives. Then, they hadn't worked hard or understood the significance of what they were being taught. Now, they felt that they had entered a new developmental phase and had a responsibility to be role models for those younger than themselves. Some respondents shared stories of how they had recently had discussions with younger people to give them advice, like this young man from Little Rock:

> *I just take my life experiences and try to tell like people that I know, like young people, like a lot of young people out here that used to look up to me. I used to be the fighter type, the aggressive type. I use that to show them that, I mean, there's somethin' better out here for you, because doing this will lead up to dead or in jail, and if that's what you want then go 'head, but I'm sure that's not what anybody wants. So hopefully it will affect them.*

They connected those efforts to their own development of self-discipline, as this male participant in Richmond did: "You gotta change yo'self before you try to change anybody else. ... If you want to change somebody else you gotta make a progress, so they can see what you doin' and take you seriously."

As with neighboring, giving advice or serving as a

Organizational Profile: Civic Justice Corps (CJC; Part of The Corps Network)

corpsnetwork.org

"In the Civic Justice Corps (CJC), formerly incarcerated and court-involved youth reconnect with their community and find pathways to success through service." "The Corps Network is a proud advocate and representative of the nation's Service and Conservation Corps…a direct descendant of the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps."[3]

Youth-Development Model	
The outcomes (knowledge, skills and experiences) that the organization wants its young participants to develop	In the CJC, young people engage in their local communities by conducting projects within the neighborhoods where they reside. They conduct the projects through mechanisms similar to service-learning, starting by mapping the assets in their environments. Participants leave with an understanding of what local issues are, and develop the skills to collaborate and create a community project with a local community-based organization. Participants also develop skills for the workforce, such as being self-sufficient, and knowing how to apply for a job by conducting projects with local government agencies or nonprofits.
The opportunities for youth to develop these outcomes within the organization	There are 14 CJC sites or Corps sites that specifically target and serve court-involved young people across the country. An important component is the cohort model. Groups start together and finish six months later. Participants receive an hourly stipend. Some CJC sites are also YouthBuild sites. A goal for CJC is to create a community among the participants, and as much as is feasible, to keep in touch with alumni.
Trainings, lessons or a curriculum that guide youth work	The design of the curriculum is unique to each location. The New York site (NYCJC) has a three-phase model: orientation, a service-learning component, and an employment internship component. Each day's activities are appropriate for the phase that participants have reached. Another component of the program is case management. A case manager meets with the participants on a weekly basis to maintain a set of goals and consistently revise or revisit the participant's plan. This provides the participants with support to progress in completing the three phases.
How young people get involved	Local CJC programs have developed relationships with correctional facilities and probation officers. However, many participants are found through word-of-mouth. Because of the high demand for slots in New York, NYCJC uses a selection process, identifying potential participants whom they consider to be most motivated. They do not screen for levels of education. Participants are predominantly 18-24 years old, involved with the criminal justice system or recently released from jail, and young men of color.

[3] http://www.opportunitynation.org/partners/entry/corps-network/

At what point youth "graduate" or leave the organization	In the NYCJC site, the requirements to graduate include: completing each phase, completing 10 weeks worth of a service project, and finishing a 6-week internship. In a few sites, graduates of CJC can stay involved. For example, the Robin Hood Foundation funded an alumni center for NYCJC, staffed with four people, who can conduct systematic outreach to alumni, provide weekly or monthly events, and offer incentives to help graduates stay employed or in school. This effort, called the Peer Leadership Academy, includes four to six graduates who are selected to continue as peer leaders; they assist with community outreach and the newsletter. The Los Angeles site has a strong connection to a community college for a similar purpose.

Overall Change Strategy	
Overall impact and change that the organization seeks	The goal of CJC is to provide young people with job placements and educational gains (marketable skills), while providing a positive impact on local neighborhoods. This positive impact would include and be measured by a reduction in crime, no recidivism, and life-long community service (so that participants see the connection between their progress, their communities' progress, and their work). Participants coming out of CJC should be better citizens, often reversing young peoples' relationship with their neighbors and community, so they are viewed in a more positive way.
Strategies that the organization uses to make this impact	The strategies generally include the three-phase model mentioned above. In addition, some sites, such as NYCJC, provide networking opportunities with local leaders. Others organize "fee-for-service" programs such as landscaping, so Corps members can establish themselves as resources in the area.
Why youth?	The youth involved with the CJC are picked because they have all been disenfranchised, and many have had some sort of interaction with the criminal justice system. All of the participants share similar challenges and barriers, so they experience little stigma from peers within the program. That makes it easier to build relationships and an ethic of service.

role model seemed natural or a part of everyday life; respondents did not mention it when prompted with the idea of "making change." We detected a perceived gap between taking individual action and feeling that individuals could make change on a larger scale. In fact, many respondents expressed inefficacy for collective action; only a small minority suggested that working together would be possible and would make a difference. A male participant in Baltimore concluded that, "The only thing I can do is talk to the people I know, maybe the little dudes around the way."

Some respondents recalled that they had contributed to their communities by attending meetings, volunteering at schools, or through other youth-related programs like Boys & Girls Clubs, tutoring and mentoring programs, churches with youth ministries, or community-based organizations, like City Year and United Teen Equality Center. Many times, their involvement seemed to be related to their own children's enrollment in these programs. Sometimes they were asked to participate by someone in their close network, a family member or friend. They were much more likely to say yes to the opportunity if came from someone they trusted. They did not connect these forms of engagement to political participation. In the instances in which the young people were active as role models, as mentors, or by contributing to an organization like the PTA at their own child's school, the motivation was a desire to better the lives of their own child or youth in general.

"You gotta change yo'self before you try to change anybody else. … If you want to change somebody else you gotta make a progress, so they can see what you doin' and take you seriously."

Participants Are Engaged in Critical Analysis and Discussion

Participants in our focus groups were quick to cite numerous and complex problems in their own communities. They gave the impression that they had thought about these problems before and discussed them with others. Although this is not a comparative study involving college students and non-college youth, a consciousness and habit of discussing serious social issues may be more prevalent in the non-college group.

The focus groups themselves seemed to be an empowering and interesting experience for participants. They liked having someone ask them questions and listen to their responses and valued the experience of being able to talk about local issues with people who came from different neighborhoods than their own. The following interaction occurred among a small group of women in Richmond, in response to a question about what opportunities participants would want to see:

> **Person 1:** *Like this, I thought this was goin' to be boring. [Agreement]*
> **Person 1:** *Some of these research they want you to take a pill and try to get you to draw blood. … I come and listen, but stuff like this. … I wouldn't want to do all that, but this…*
> **Person 2:** *It's nice*
> **Person 1:** *You know what I'm sayin', you came in…*
> **Person 2:** *It's comfortable*
> **Person 3:** *It feel like y'all concerned*

Respondents discussed issues like gang violence, the safety of their own children, neighborhood blight, and homelessness in their own communities. They were often clear about what could be better in their communities, such as parks or community events that would keep young people occupied and off the streets. This included opportunities for discussion, like the focus group, which inspired a male participant in Richmond to comment: "I feel like, like how we got this going on, I feel like there should be somethin' like this for young folks that [have] court charges and really want to do somethin' with their life. They need a meeting for that." This female respondent in Little Rock and others felt that crime was partly a result of a lack of positive opportunities: "Most of the troublemakers, as they're called, or whatever—hoodlums, or whatever—they only acting out because they don't have anywhere to go."

They sometimes connected social problems to their own personal experience, and sometimes expressed general interest in being able to address these problems. For example, a young woman in Lowell said, "That's a really hitting, to me, topic, because at one point I was kinda homeless...I want to be someone so I can be able to be there for [the homeless]...just like I am now as a volunteer. I want to be there and actually have the power to do something and help them."

Although this is not a comparative study involving college students and non-college youth, a consciousness and habit of discussing serious social issues may be more prevalent in the non-college group.

Participants were also knowledgeable about national problems, such as the economic recession, taxes, and a lack of jobs. They cited radio, television and the Internet as among the ways in which they had learned about issues. But they had also discussed issues with their close networks, at home, with family, and at work. Discussion of public or common issues is a form of civic engagement, and these young people showed evidence that they had created discussions, using information gleaned from the mass media.

When asked how they would approach solving public problems, many were quick to give an example or propose a strategy. We posed a question using a hypothetical example (a school that was going to close down because of a lack of funding) and many said this case resonated with their own lives. Many said they had a clear idea of whom they would have to contact, and proposed potential strategies, such as contacting the school board, or organizing a fundraiser. Sometimes, they connected such strategies to broader points about how society should be organized, such as a young woman in Lowell who said:

> *My dream ideal-ness would be ... to show the government that if they spent more money in like handling the problem before, they wouldn't need to spend so much money in like dealing with it after. ... If they put the money towards programs to prevent things...that's so much money you could save if you just showed them, like, not to do it.*

Although many of the respondents were quickly able to name the most serious public issue in their communities, they were not able to link the issue with opportunities for them to take civic or political action. In fact, many had deep knowledge of these issues—especially on a local level—but had never been given (nor created) any opportunity to take action. That they could act effectively seemed implausible to many of the youth in our focus groups. Many believed that it would be challenging to organize themselves because of negative reactions from some members of their communities. As one female respondent in Little Rock said, "Negativity, like, I cannot stand negativity: so if I'm trying to do something positive for the community, but am constantly getting negativity back, then why should I try?"

Many also felt that the community couldn't mobilize, because members were focused on caring and protecting their own families. They suggested that this was true at both a collective and an individual level. That is, individuals could not actually organize because they had too many problems to deal with in their private lives, and the community would discourage participation, saying that individuals should focus on their private concerns. If someone tried to take civic action, neighbors would say, "You should take care of yourself first."

"I'm gonna tell you how it is. ... We complain about it, but we won't take action, because we feel like we ain't in a position to take action. Me personally, you'll have to put it out on a map for me, you'll have to show me the steps, because I ain't gonna work it."

Many participants felt that others viewed them as not being able to contribute to social change and also doubted that they were actually prepared or qualified to participate effectively. On that point, one young man in Richmond said, "I'm gonna tell you how it is. ... We complain about it, but we won't take action, because we feel like we ain't in

a position to take action. Me personally, you'll have to put it out on a map for me, you'll have to show me the steps, because I ain't gonna work it."

Those Who Are Recruited, Engage

Although communities that are disproportionately likely to produce non-college youth are disadvantaged in several ways that depress participation, they are also the sites of institutions—churches, community-based organizations, and relationships between neighbors—that can promote a civic spirit. A poor urban neighborhood can be a "developmental ground for children's civic attitudes" (McBride et al., 2006). In light of the common stereotype of urban youth as threatening delinquents, positive civic experiences that show youth to be assets to their communities are particularly important (Forman, 2004; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007).

The relatively small number of young people who were in civic organizations when we recruited them for our focus groups tended to describe entering these programs to meet new people, to learn concrete skills, or to occupy time, but they obtained civic motivations from participating. For example, a male participant in Lowell said, 'When I first came into UTEC [the United Teen Equality Center], I seen like a whole bunch of teens, enjoying each other .... When my friends took me to UTEC, ... that whole gang attitude that I had just [left out of me] and a new person literally started walking up the stairs and was looking at the Center and all that.'"

We did not hear participants express commitments to any particular ideology that had motivated them to join organizations or take civic action. In a handful of instances, participants voiced a commitment to a political idea, like supporting Democrats because they stood for working people, or feeling pressure to support Obama because he would be the first African American president, but these motives did not draw them into organizations.

They described scattered examples of safe spaces, in contrast to other parts of their communities that they viewed as negative and often violent. They reported feeling empowered when provided with interactive opportunities, especially where learning occurred, or they were able to voice their opinion.

In an extensive evaluation of the alumni of YouthBuild USA that we conducted simultaneously with this study (CIRCLE, 2012), we found that former participants had almost always entered YouthBuild for practical reasons, such as obtaining job skills or because of a court order, but had encountered a setting in which they were encouraged and expected to discuss and collaborate. As a result, they had developed strong identities as active citizens. They described obtaining civic skills as an unexpected byproduct of participating:

> *I never knew what a budget plan was, I never knew how to keep minutes, I never knew how to do all that, and when I got to the policy committee and they started showing me these things, it just kept motivating me more and more to just keep doing positive and wanting to sit on not only the policy committee at YouthBuild, but what committees can I get on in my neighborhood and can I be on a neighborhood association committee. ... So it definitely just opened up my mind to what else was out there. (CIRCLE, 2012, p. 28)*

YouthBuild participants also developed strong commitments to service and leadership. "I like the feeling, I feel selfish because I get so much joy out of helping others and being a leader—that's what I'm doing—because that's what I consider a leader to be—someone who will encourage and motivate—that's how I plan on living the rest of my life"(CIRCLE, 2012, p. 28). This kind of self-description was frequent in our interviews of YouthBuild alumni, because they had been recruited into a program that developed their civic identities, but it was rare in the focus groups for this study, because most participants never had such experiences.

Our findings about the positive impact of being recruited into civic organizations are amply supported by other research. Hart and Atkins (2002, p. 231) report that adolescents aged 10-14 who were members of a club or team were 10 times more likely to report being volunteers 2 years later. Belonging to groups is more likely for advantaged young people. For example, data from the 1998 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth showed that White youth were 35 percent more likely than African American or Hispanic teenagers to report affiliation with a club or team; "teenagers in non-impoverished households are 25 percent more likely than teens in poor families to be members of teams and clubs; and children of high school graduates are 30 percent more likely than children of high-school dropouts to belong to teams or clubs" Hart & Atkins, 2002,pp. 231-232). Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter (2003, p. 275) posit that organizational membership has a positive effect on later engagement, regardless of demographic characteristics: "Individuals who were active in school organizations (except athletics) as teenagers are disproportionately more involved as adults, even when the impact of later influences such as marriage, children, and advanced education are taken into account."

Organizational Profile: The YouthBuild Model & YouthBuild USA

youthbuild.org

YouthBuild USA is the national support center for a network of 273 local YouthBuild programs in 45 states, Washington, DC, and the Virgin Islands. "YouthBuild is a youth and community development program that simultaneously addresses core issues facing low-income communities: housing, education, employment, crime prevention, and leadership development. In YouthBuild programs, low-income young people ages 16-24 work toward their GEDs or high school diplomas, learn job skills and serve their communities by building affordable housing, and transform their own lives and roles in society." [4]

YouthBuild USA provides local programs with training, technical assistance, supplemental funding, and networking through its affiliated network, and is also responsible for alumni leadership activities and councils. These leadership opportunities seek to sustain the leadership that was developed through the local programs. Individual YouthBuild programs are run by local staff.

Youth-Development Model	
The outcomes (knowledge, skills and experiences) that the organization wants its young participants to develop	YouthBuild wants to provide young people with the skills: • to be able to effectively serve their communities by building affordable housing • to serve the community through activities other than construction • to become effective leaders by providing the opportunity and skills to be positive role models, to attend and participate in public meetings, to gain knowledge of issues in the community, to learn how to lead a meeting, keep an agenda, and keep a schedule, and to learn how to express views in front of a group of people • to work with people who have different opinions and backgrounds • to leave with an increased interest to pursue further education, and to learn to organize around issues • to leave better prepared to pursue a sustainable career
The opportunities for youth to develop these outcomes within the organization	The YouthBuild program provides the following components: • an opportunity to study for their GED or a high school diploma outside of school • community service (building housing for homeless and other low-income people), which provides students with an outlet to give back to the community • the job training and apprenticeship program gives students the skills they need to provide the house-building services • the civic engagement & leadership development component of the program allows young people to share governance in their program through an elected policy committee, and also teaches them to participate actively in community affairs Lastly, the youth-development component provides young people with the support they need to succeed in the program; this component allows the students to participate in personal counseling or peer-to-peer support groups. The love and community that YouthBuild provides is a safety net for students who are faced with several barriers along the way.

[4] http://www.dropoutprevention.org/modelprograms

How young people get involved	YouthBuild conducts local meetings to recruit young people. Many of the participants hear about YouthBuild through word-of-mouth or by seeing fliers. Many young people report that they responded to these fliers because they advertised a job opportunity or an opportunity to get one's GED.
At what point youth "graduate" or leave the organization	Each program sets its specific graduation or completion criteria. YouthBuild USA offers several leadership opportunities to engage students and alumni. They include the YouthBuild 1000 Graduate Leaders Network, The National Alumni Council (peer elected), The National Young Leaders Council (elected), a Speakers Bureau, and the Alumni Exchange (an annual gathering). Alumni can also represent YouthBuild at events and attend a YouthBuild "Statehouse Day." Graduates work as staff at numerous YouthBuild programs.

Overall Change Strategy	
The combination of classroom education, construction training, career development, counseling/life skills, and community leadership skills and training allows young people to use their full potential to create change.	
Why Youth? And the overall impact and change that the organization seeks	The mission of YouthBuild USA is to unleash the intelligence and positive energy of low-income youth to rebuild their communities and their lives. YouthBuild USA seeks to work with others to help construct a movement toward a more just society, in which respect, love, responsibility, and cooperation are the dominant unifying values, and sufficient opportunities are available for all people in all communities to fulfill their own potential and contribute to the well-being of others.
Strategies that the organization uses to make this impact	YouthBuild thinks of young people as future leaders and potential change makers. YouthBuild sees the importance of providing young people with the leadership skills to effectively participate in civic life (as well as provide for themselves and their families). YouthBuild defines leadership as when a person takes steps to make things better for self, family, program, and community. In addition, strategies include most of the elements that young people need: a positive culture of respect and high expectations; the power of love, coupled with the power of opportunity; a caring, competent staff, who go above and beyond what the young people expect in terms of caring and respect; real skills training, quality education, and pathways to a positive future.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) can also boost engagement among traditionally disengaged young people by giving them pathways to involvement and actively seeking out youth participation. Meaningful experiences with CBOs may facilitate what Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) refer to as "civic praxis"—helping to develop the critical consciousness needed for young people to respond to and change oppressive conditions in their neighborhood.

Youth-focused centers and organizations have a strong potential to provide transformative experiences for young people. For example, Borden and Serido (2009) suggest that the safe space that a youth center provides allows young people to build trust, connect to their peers, and develop a sense of responsibility to their community. Additionally, community organizations that involve young people in activism can promote collective efficacy, according to Berg, Coman, and Schensul (2009, p. 345). The authors describe the results of the Youth Action Research

Community-based organizations (CBOs) can also boost engagement among traditionally disengaged young people by giving them pathways to involvement and actively seeking out youth participation.

for Prevention program, an intervention that "trains youth as a group to use research to understand their community better … and then engages them in using the research for social action at multiple levels in community settings"(p. 355). Further, they find that "once youth were able to move their research to action and reflect on the impact," they "experienced a significant increase in community-level efficacy" as opposed to youth in a comparison group (Berg et al., 2009, p.355).

O'Donoghue and Kirshner (2003, p. 4) spell out some of the ways in which community-based youth organizations complement schools as institutions of civic learning. CBOs "often have less hierarchical structures that allow for greater youth autonomy and participation" and are flexible enough to "present broader and more youth-centered conceptions of citizenship." Through a qualitative examination of five community-based youth organizations, O'Donoghue and Kirshner (2003, p. 19) find that participants "developed important competencies for democratic participation," including the ability to collaborate, familiarity with local issues, and comfort with responsibility and decision making.

Because we drew reasonably representative samples of non-college youth in the communities where we conducted focus groups, we found relatively few who had been recruited into pro-social or civic programs. These programs are far too rare. But those who were members of such groups testified to the value of such organizations, confirming the benefits that have also been found in other studies.

The Contexts of Youth Development

People come of age—moving through childhood into young adulthood—within a nested set of contexts or settings that begin with their families and households and come to include ethnic or cultural groups, neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, political jurisdictions, and the nation-state. In the following sections, we explore our respondents' opinions of these settings as venues for developing civic skills and motivations. On the whole, their reactions were highly critical and alienated, although certain positive reactions did emerge.

Families

Families and networks of close friends did provide positive settings for at least some of our respondents to develop civic skills and habits. Respondents cited relatives as role models who had shown them the "right way," helped them in various capacities, and provided examples of how to take positive action in the community. Some said that family members, such as grandparents or parents, had served as role models for giving back to the community. Grandmothers were specifically mentioned in this respect several times. As one male participant in Richmond said of a grandmother, "That's the only person I can look to because she done been through all that."

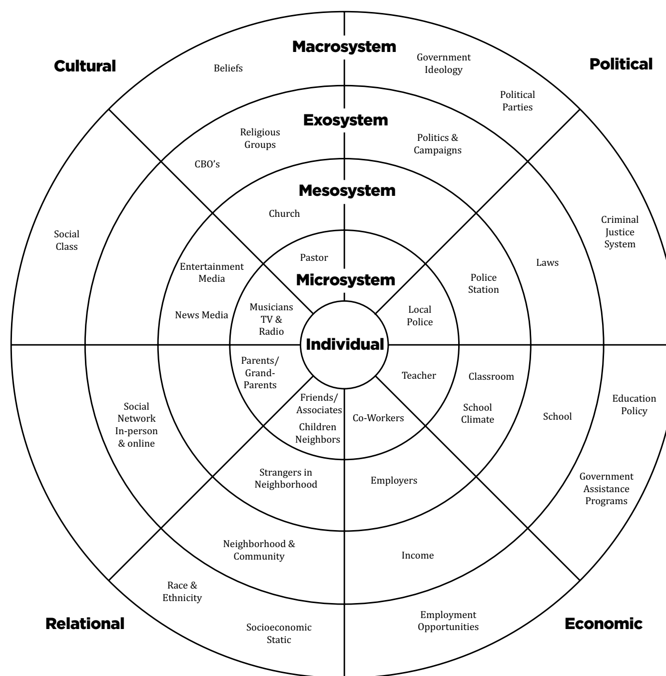
Previous research on parents' and families' effects on youth development emphasizes the impact of households' socio-economic status (SES) on civic engagement and political activity (Verba, Burns & Scholzman, 2003). Studies suggest that parents' SES, measured by educational attainment and income, plays an important role in the civic engagement of children. Rosenstone and Wolfinger (1980, p. 20) find that "years of schooling reflect family background more than any other demographic characteristic does. . . [P]eople who have gone to college are more likely to have educated and/or

affluent parents." Parents' education is the driving force behind generational transmission of political inequality (Verba, et al., 2003). Because of this correlation between parents' socioeconomic status and their offspring's education, youth whose parents have less formal education are less likely to come from homes where books, newspapers, and magazines are read and where politics is discussed. According to Niemi and Junn (2008, p. 129), "less reading material at home, less frequent two-parent households (among African Americans) and infrequent plans to go to a four-year college (among minority students)" are correlated with lower political knowledge as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (although the factors listed explain only part of the variation in test scores).

Beyond the impact of SES, individual parents influence the civic behavior of their own children through their own habits of engagement. In fact, McIntosh, Hart, and Youniss (2007, p. 497) suggest that "who parents are in terms of background characteristics is less important for youth civic development than what parents do with their adolescent children, and what parents know about politics and government." In other words, the effect of parental SES on their children's engagement may be mediated by parents' choices and behaviors. Supporting this hypothesis, Andolina et al. (2003, p. 277) find that "young people who were raised in homes where someone volunteered (43 percent of all youth) are highly involved themselves," controlling for observable "demographic and other factors."

The relationship between parents' voting habits and those of their children is well documented: Plutzer (2002), for example, finds that, with statistical controls in place, parents' voting raises their children's turnout substantially. Thus "parents who said that they did not vote leave their offspring substantially behind in the acquisition of the habit of voting" (Plutzer, 2002, p. 48) . More generally, civic role models in adolescence are a crucial part of youth civic development and can encourage participation (Janoski & Wilson, 1995; Kirlin, 2002; Smith, 1999). Zaff, Malanchuk, and Eccles (2008, p.48) posit that "living with a civic context contributes to the development of civic engagement from early adolescence into adulthood," emphasizing the need for consistency in civic behavior into early adulthood.

FIGURE 9:
MODEL OF SYSTEMS THAT IMPACT YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



Adapted from "An illustration of Brofenbrenner's (1979) ecosystemic model," by D. Fromme, 2011, Ecosystemic issues and approaches. Systems of Psychotherapy (401-427) (New York: Springer).

Because parents in lower income brackets often juggle several jobs and other responsibilities, the trade-off they face between community involvement and investment in personal and practical matters can be significant. Parents who already have many personal responsibilities may not see an immediate value in getting involved in their communities. Economic strains related to jobs, income, and childcare availability act as a barrier for low-income parents to actively participate in civic activities (Obradovic & Masten, 2007; Safrit & Lopez, 2001; Smetana & Metzger, 2005). As a lack of parental civic involvement is consequently related to lower engagement levels among adolescents, this may put low-income youth at a further disadvantage for future participation.

Many participants in our focus groups were themselves parents. Pacheco and Plutzer (2007) note that 12.1 percent of Hispanics and 14.4 percent of African Americans have or are expecting children by their senior year of high school. Although early parenthood is often discussed as a problem, some evidence suggests that becoming a parent at a younger age facilitates civic involvement by increasing the likelihood that the parent will get involved in community-oriented activities and groups (Swartz, Blackstone, Uggen, & McLaughlin, 2009). Longitudinal analysis suggests

that "children provided [their young parents] with an opportunity to join in with others in their community for a common purpose" (Swartz et al., 2009, p. 656). Oesterle, Johnson, and Mortimer (2004) find that this is not the case when the child is in pre-school, though they find that this changes as the child ages.

Conventional measures of civic engagement may understate the participation of low-income parents, becausequalitative research suggests that such parents often engage through their children's activities by "coaching sports, leading Girl Scouts, and volunteering to help in the classroom or on field trips," among other ways (McBride, et al., 2006, p. 15).

In conclusion, the young people in our sample were more likely to cite families than other contexts as positive influences on their civic development. Nevertheless, two aspects of their family life may discourage future participation. First, non-college youth are more likely to grow up in households without resources and connections that promote engagement. Second, family characteristics and practices are strongly related to future education, which in turn affects participation. But family members can and sometimes do remedy the factors that impede participation, for example by being engaged, or serving as civic role models.

Schools

Although participants in our focus groups were not enrolled in educational institutions when we spoke with them, they had all attended K-12 schools in the past. One of the original justifications for the establishment of universal schooling in the United States was to prepare people to be responsible and effective citizens, especially voters and jurors; and civic education remains a purpose of schools, as demonstrated by the fact that all states have standards for civics (Lennon, 2006).

In practice, schools can encourage or discourage civic engagement in many ways, ranging from specific courses or programs that are explicitly concerned with civics, politics, or social issues, to the curriculum as a whole, to the climate of the school (which may serve as a microcosm of democracy and community), to the larger policies that determine who attends which schools, and how they are funded and evaluated.

This study is not intended to investigate the causal impact of schooling on civic engagement. It relies on the recollections of a sample of former students, most of whom did not succeed well academically, or become highly engaged civically. Some of their fellow students may have been served better by schools, and perhaps would provide more positive appraisals. The recollections that we heard were overwhelmingly and sometimes scathingly critical. Even if partial, this perspective at least raises important questions about whether students who are not on an explicit college-track are being well educated for citizenship. National data about inequalities in opportunities for civic learning generally reinforce their critique, and opportunities exist for further study.

Background: Education Enhances Citizenship but Is Unequally Provided

Participants in our focus groups were screened so that none had any education after high school, and some had not completed high school. Previous research suggests that this might explain why they rarely engaged in civic acts measured on standard surveys. Educational attainment (e.g., high school graduation or college attendance) is strongly correlated with indicators of civic engagement, including voting, volunteering, and group membership (Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry 1996). The correlation between educational attainment and voting is strong, consistently found in all studies, and usually survives controls for other demographic variables (e.g., Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995). Sondheimer and Green (2010, p. 174) note that this relationship has been found in "literally thousands of cross-sectional surveys" since 1924.

The correlation between educational attainment and voting is strong, consistently found in all studies, and usually survives controls for other demographic variables.

The reason for this relationship is still disputed. One view is that education is mostly a proxy for relative social status. According to this theory, education does not increase turnout, but rather defines a high-SES group that participates at a relatively high rate (Nie, et al., 1996). According to Nie et al. and others, education does not actually boost civic engagement, but simply reflects privilege and power. That would explain why years of schooling has been correlated with civic engagement for a century, yet, as the average amount of formal education has risen in the United States, the average amount of civic engagement has not. Consistent with that theory, our respondents were quick

to explain their lack of participation as a result of economic insecurity and low social status.

Researchers using the Youth-Parent Socialization Study have generated conflicting results as to whether educational attainment has an independent effect on voter turnout. Milligan, Moretti, and Oreopolos (2004), and Dee (2004) conclude that educational attainment strongly influences turnout, independent of factors (such as socioeconomic status) that correlate with education; however, a more recent study by Kam and Palmer (2008) suggests that the apparent effect of schooling on turnout is actually due to hard-to-observe variables that promote both voting and higher education, such as an individual's pre-adult experiences.

Some recent research suggests that people actually become more active citizens as a result of what they learn in school. In a study using child labor laws and the availability of local community colleges as instrumental variables, Dee (2003) finds that educational attainment boosts youth turnout. The gains in voting are "concentrated among students with poorly educated parents"; thus, increasing access to education might reduce inequality, as well as raise the total amount of voting. Sondheimer and Green (2010) note that they were initially skeptical that the correlation between education and voting was causal. However, they took advantage of three prior experimental interventions that had raised educational attainment, and examined voting rates in the treatment and control groups. They found that "a high school dropout with a 15.6 percent chance of voting would have a 65.2 percent chance of turnout if randomly induced to graduate from high school" by means of an intervention such as the Perry Pre-School Experiment (Sondheimer & Green, 2010, 185).

Pacheco and Plutzer (2008, p. 587) come to a similar conclusion: controlling for parental education and several forms of "disadvantage" (such as poverty), the authors find that attending a four-year college increases turnout by 10% for Whites and African Americans, and by 14 percent for Hispanics. (The effect of attending a two-year college is even larger).

Indeed, schooling should boost civic engagement (voting and other behaviors), because knowledge is an essential precondition for effective engagement. An individual needs to know how the social and political system works in order to take action in an effective way: to take one example, an eligible voter may not be able to cast a ballot without understanding his or her state's registration law. As Dee (2003, p. 2) puts it, education "generate[s] broad social benefits by allowing citizens to make more informed evaluations of the complex social, political, and technological issues that might be embedded in campaign literature, legislative initiatives, and ballot referenda."

On the other hand, years of education do not reliably determine civic and political knowledge, because schools and colleges do not consistently teach civics, and civic knowledge can be gained in other ways. Studies have indicated that racial gaps in political knowledge and participation exist even among Americans with similar levels of education. For example, Niemi & Chapman (1999) find that among high school students, being non-white is associated with lower scores on a test of political knowledge, even after controlling for family, years of education, school characteristics, and student activities. Pacheco and Plutzer (2008) find that dropping out of high school decreases levels of political participation for all groups, but not as significantly for White youth as for Hispanics and African Americans.

Civics and Government Classes

One means that schools use to impart civic knowledge, interests, and skills is a set of courses, often required, that are explicitly about civics or government. When asked about their experiences with civic education (typically, a course on history, government, or social studies), far from everyone in our focus group remembered a relevant course, and far fewer recalled discussing news or current events in such classes or, indeed, experiencing any discussion at all. They recalled that civics was primarily focused on earlier American history, and included very little hands-on or interactive learning. Only a handful of young people had gone out into the community (or outside of the classroom) as a part of class.

One young woman in Baltimore enjoyed civics class, but thought that it came much too late, after many people had dropped out of school: "I actually liked my government class, but to me, it's so many things about government that we need to know. … It shouldn't have been taught in that last year you was in school."

Many participants said that what they found most interesting (but rare) was discussion of current issues. If they recalled activities such as debate or discussion, they said that these experiences allowed them to talk about issues that were relevant to them, express their opinions, and hear what others thought. Discussion provided these young people with an outlet for their voices, in a school atmosphere where they otherwise felt silenced. One young woman in Little Rock evidently valued the opportunity to talk about educational inequalities in a class: "We actually talked about relevant things, real things, we never had fake topics—always real—and everyone had real opinions about it, it wasn't a joke to the class. We weren't doing it because you get a grade for it—but it shows what you know about your community and basically your whole surroundings."

As discussed earlier, conversation outside of school was also a major way that respondents learned about issues. Some recognized the educational benefits of discussing issues. It "kind of makes me feel like I'm ahead, as far as, you know, on what to say to somebody, you know, somebody that hasn't been through school or somebody that's dropped out, wouldn't normally know," said one young man in Baltimore.

However, many respondents felt detached from what they were learning in their civics courses; in fact, many disliked civics entirely, because they found the content useless and uninteresting. Regardless of the subject matter (current issues or history), we primarily heard that social studies classes were focused on reading textbooks and completing worksheets. These activities were never recalled in a positive light. More typical were responses like this from a male participant in Baltimore: "You walked in and there were chapters and then there was the workbook exercises. The teacher would go, all right, how is everybody doing, make sure everybody's here. 'All right, grab a book. You're reading these chapters and you're doing these workbook exercises.' You go to ask him a question and he'll look at you and go, 'Look in the book.'" When asked, most participants said that they had wished that the content of civic-related courses had been more current and more relevant to their lives.

Many respondents complained about the focus on distant history, which they regarded as irrelevant. A female participant in Little Rock reflected that, "I don't care about what happened in 1908 and 1875, I don't care about that. We have a lot of issues now, we have issues in 2010—we need to be discussing these issues ..., not what happened back in the day when George Washington was President." However, it is unclear whether historical material would have been engaging if interactive teaching methods had been used to discuss the past. We did not hear of such an instance. Some respondents connected the lack of relevance in the curriculum to the lack of resources in their schools as a whole, like the young man in Baltimore who said: "I mean you're reading out of a book from 1986. The government that's written in that book is not going to be the same if you was in school in 2002."

One male respondent in Little Rock argued that studying current issues might have positive impact on students' lives in a way that was unlikely from a history class:

> *When you talk about stuff that's happenin' right now, that make somebody want to get a job and try to change somethin', like 'Oh, I want to be a doctor' or 'I want to be somebody's that in a high place so I can try to change that.' But when you're talkin' about stuff from the 1800s, like, man, this is a wagon ..., I can't relate to that. ... Who can relate to that?*

Previous research generally suggests that studying civics is beneficial, but the "best practices" include just the kinds of activities—such as moderated discussions of current events—that our respondents did not recall experiencing very often, if at all.

Bachner (2010) finds that a year of American government coursework in high school boosts voter turnout for a decade after graduation, with the biggest effects (7-11 percentage points) on students whose parents are not politically active. Kahne and Sporte (2008, p. 19) find that "classroom civic learning opportunities can more than offset the impact of neighborhood or home contexts that are relatively inattentive to civic and political issues when it comes to the development of commitments to civic participation." Niemi and Junn (1998) also find that taking civics or government classes improves civic knowledge. The benefits are not limited to civics and politics; interactive courses in civics also boost "21st Century Skills," such as "skills in understanding what is presented in the media; the ability to work well with others, especially diverse groups; positive attitudes about working hard and obeying the law; and creativity and innovation" (Torney-Purta & Wilkenfeld, 2009, p. 1).

But access to civic education is not equally distributed: many civic-related courses are required during the senior year of high school, and are therefore missed by students who drop out before graduating. Moreover, Kahne and Middaugh (2008) show that young people who plan to attend four-year colleges are much more likely to report receiving instruction in law or government, and discussing current events and social problems in class. The fact that college-bound high school students are much more likely than their peers to report having participated in traditional civics courses suggests that the civic disadvantages of non-college youth begin in high school.

The Civic Mission of Schools report (2003, p. 23) concludes that "civic education instruction works better when it involves active discussion and debate, and makes connections to current issues that affect students' lives . . .rather than rote study of abstract principles and dry procedures." Hess (2009) also argues that discussion of controversial issues in the classroom boosts civic learning. Discussion of current issues more than doubles the amount of political knowledge gained from taking a civics course (Niemi & Junn, 1998). Similarly, students develop a sense of community and a stronger sense of their civic engagement as a result of taking a civics class geared towards local history (Rogers, 2009). Torney-Purta and Wilkenfeld (2009, p. 1) find that the most knowledge acquisition and skill development happens in "interactive discussion-based civic education," when compared to classes with mostly lecture, or no civic education at all.

A related issue is content: what topics are assigned in classes, and how these topics are presented. In the 1960s, Litt (1963, p. 74) found that students were "being trained to play different political roles, and to respond to political phenomena in different ways." He argued that working-class students were given a basic civic education related to democratic principles, without reinforcing the importance of political participation, conflict and resolution, or the responsibilities of citizenship—all things taught in schools with students of higher SES. Evidence suggests that the same pattern remains common today (Levinson, 2012).

The topics considered in civics courses should be relevant to the "real political lives of students" (Niemi & Junn, 1998, p. 148). Because they have different experiences outside school, students bring diverse understandings of what active citizenship and democracy mean (Rubin & Hayes, 2010). That means that content should perhaps vary depending on the identity of students. Junn (2004, p .254) calls for further consideration to be paid to diversity when implementing civic education curricula, writing that "strategic calculations among individuals categorized by race and ethnicity vary systematically as a function of the location of their group in the social and political hierarchy."

That means that in general, civics is more of a "disjunctive" experience for students who face serious problems in their communities than it is for students who are well served by the government on a daily basis.

Rubin and various co-authors theorize that students face either "congruence" or "disjuncture" between their daily life experiences and classroom content (Rubin, 2007; Rubin & Hayes, 2010; Hayes & Benson, 2009). For example, if textbooks describe the United States as a well-functioning democracy, students from peaceful and well-governed communities will experience "congruence," whereas students who perceive injustice in their home communities well see "disjuncture." "Settings of disjuncture" have "tremendous potential … for meaningful civic learning," if teachers explicitly discuss the gaps between principles and reality (Rubin & Hayes, 2010, p. 372). Participants in our focus groups often described disjuncture. For example a young man in Richmond said: "They say it's the land of the free. ... It ain't."

Other authors suggest that civic education should be redefined to include the "realities of globalization and transnational communities," arguing that youth of color receive little academic support to understand their own lives in a civic context (Abu El-Haj, 2009, p. 8; Roberts, Bell, & Murphy, 2008). Hinton (2010) finds that how teachers teach citizenship education and define citizenship determines African American students' desire to promote social justice.

National survey data suggest that young people are much more likely to report discussing traditional civic themes, such as the structure of the Constitution, than "problems facing the country today" (Kirby & Lopez, 2007). That means that in general, civics is more of a "disjunctive" experience for students who face serious problems in their communities than it is for students who are well served by the government on a daily basis. Youth in our focus groups certainly recalled disjuncture between what was taught in their schools and what they actually experienced in their communities, and very few said that the disjuncture had been addressed or acknowledged.

Service-Learning and Service Programs in Schools

Several participants argued that civic education should be an applied subject rather than theoretical or historical. A male respondent in Richmond said:

> *I told all my teachers that, throughout my years, I'm not somebody that sit there with papers in front of them. . . .I have no problem with doing the work, I got problems with paperwork. . . . Instead of findin' another way to interact with that person besides the papers. . . get a person into hands-on things—somethin' that grabs their attention. Who goes to school everyday just to get a stack of papers thrown in front of them? . . . Papers don't grab attention no more, no matter what color you print it on.*

Some respondents suggested that an educator, such as a school counselor or a particular teacher, had assisted them in getting involved in the community or helped them get on a positive track. This was the experience of a female participant in Little Rock, who said, "My old track coach always wanted us to be involved in everything. He always told us that he didn't want to just teach us how to run . . . he wanted give us stuff that we can take with us for the rest of our life. . . . And something you'd be able to benefit somebody else with." But many youth expressed a complete mistrust of the school system and teachers generally. We explore this reaction in more detail below.

Further, most participants had never experienced community service connected to the school curriculum, the common pedagogy formally known as “service-learning.” Some did recall one-time volunteer opportunities in school. But several said that as students, they would not have been able to go out into the community because of safety concerns, such as violence. One young woman in Little Rock reacted to the idea of service-learning: “No! At Central? No. I wouldn’t have went. Uh-uh! .. . .Blood. . . They wouldn’t a had me out there. . . All that gang-related stuff. [A teacher] sheltered me [from having to do service] and I’m happy he did.”

When students did recall participating in service through schools, they did not think they had learned from it, and some felt they had been exploited. For example, a male participant in Little Rock said, “The janitors get paid for it!” “I just feel like they was using us. I mean, what’s picking up trash showing us, beside being clean? . . . It didn’t teach us nothing.”

These reflections seem to contradict the research on service-learning, which has been shown to be an effective means of engaging youth (Andolina, et al., 2003; Safrit & Lopez, 2001; Stepick, Stepick & Labissiere, 2008). But effective service-learning must be deep and of interest to the students (Morgan & Streb, 2001; Webster, 2007). Service-learning is more effective when students have the ability to reflect on their service (Billig, Root & Jesse, 2005). Kahne and Middaugh (2008) found that youth who were planning to go to college from high school were more than three times more likely than non-college-bound youth to have access to community service-learning programs, again suggesting that disparate opportunities in high school contribute to the engagement gap by college experience.

School Climate

Courses and programs specifically concerned with civics, government, or service are by no means the only ways that schools educate about citizenship. Another important factor is the general climate established in the school, which can be orderly, respectful, safe, and supportive, or far from any of those things.

Respondents in our focus groups reported very low trust in their own teachers. They offered many critical recollections. For example, a young man in Baltimore reflected, “It was called U.S. Government. That was … what was what my class was called, and we just watched movies and stuff like that. . . .Well, my teacher was like a drama queen and her boyfriend broke up with her, so she was devastated for, like, a month.” A young woman in Baltimore recalled, “A lot of teachers stood there and told us in our faces, you know, you’re not going to be anything. I don’t know why you even come to school to waste your time.”

One male respondent in Little Rock provided a detailed description of the school climate as harmful to civic development:

> *We are built, you know, to believe, you know, we have these rights, we have this, we have that. But when it comes down to it, it’s like, it’s able to be flexed, you know. Like, you have these rights, but not on this property. Or, you can do that, but not over here, you gotta go that way. That’s unfair. . . . If we’re standin’ as a collective group protesting something or trying to better ourselves, you know, I believe it should be encouraged, instead of being discouraged . . . that discourages us from doin’ the right thing, and then we start thinkin’, ah, well when we get the right thing we get the wrong answer, so when we do the wrong thing are we gon’ get the right answers?*

Participants did not describe their schools as empowering places. When one focus group was asked whether they had a voice in their school, they all simply laughed. One young man in Little Rock argued that student voice in school was a myth: “Even when you are class president and school president you still don’t have a say, so ... it’s only a show. . . . It takes the people who really have a say so to actually implement change.” And another male respondent in Little Rock emphasized the chaotic and disrespectful atmosphere:

Another important factor is the general climate established in the school, which can be orderly, respectful, safe, and supportive, or far from any of those things.

> *It’s sad because like people are gonna expect us, once we get older, to step up to the plate, and like, we’re lacking, like the drive or some of the knowledge that should have been handed down to us instead of us just sittin’ in class and doing whatever the heck we want to...change, it starts with the people who have a say-so. ... In school teachers have a say-so.*

These recollections are troubling because the climate of schools and classrooms has been found to matter for civic engagement. Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, and Gallay (2007) find that a democratic classroom environment can promote civic participation. For youth of all ethnicities, students

who believe that "teachers treated students fairly" are more likely to endorse the idea that "America is a just society"; and students who think that teachers practice a "democratic ethos" are more likely to express strong civic commitments (Flanagan, et al., 2007, p. 427). The authors find that such school-related perceptions explain most of the variance in the civic attitudes of minority youth. Torney-Purta and Wilkenfeld (2009, p. 16) find that an "open classroom climate for discussion" is an important predictor of trust in institutions and schools, which is associated with conventional political participation.

Extracurricular activities also have the potential to foster civic engagement by imparting skills and by connecting young people to networks (Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Otto, 1976; Scott & Willits, 1998; Smith, 1999). A handful of young people mentioned that they felt supported by one or a few teachers or a counselor. In some instances, these teachers or counselors provided entry points for students to be involved in extracurricular activities related to service. McFarland and Thomas (2006, p. 418) find that membership in a wide variety of "politically salient youth organizations," including "drama clubs, musical groups, and religious organizations," has a modest but positive effect on political participation 6 to 12 years later in life, controlling for demographic characteristics, parenting practices, and student attitudes. However, the impact of extracurriculars may be more modest than those of civic learning opportunities in the classroom (Kahne & Sporte, 2008).

Religious Congregations

Outside of schools, one of the most common settings for developing civic skills, interests, and knowledge is a religious congregation. Churches and other congregations are important institutions in urban neighborhoods. This emerged in our focus groups, but distrust of churches was palpable, and some respondents specifically mentioned the misuse of charitable contributions by churches. But sometimes religious congregations were mentioned as favorable settings. A female participant in Little Rock reflected, "We don't have many role models to look to...I don't see a lot of people trying to help, except in the church."

Survey research finds that religiosity (as measured by regular service attendance) is strongly correlated with volunteering among youth with no college experience (Kirby, Marcelo & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2009). Thirty-seven percent of young volunteers with no college experience volunteered with religious organizations, more than volunteered for any other type of organization, and slightly above the figure for college-educated youth. According to Zaff and colleagues (2008, p. 50), "Religiosity in early adolescence, assessed in part as youth participation in religious activities. . . predicts civic engagement in young adulthood" for youth of all income ranges. Moreover, for urban young people, involvement and participation in a church committee has been shown to develop civic skills (e.g. communication, writing and organizing skills), which gives young people the confidence necessary to participate in activism.

This involvement and development can come in the form of oppositional resistance. This phenomenon did not come up in our focus groups, but has been demonstrated through research on African American youth's involvement in the Nation of Islam (NoI) as described by S.Ginwright (personal communication, October 5-6, 2011). Akom (2003, p. 318) writes that the agency the students displayed "came from a unique form of religious socialization that produces a social consciousness whereby students are encouraged to politicize their cultural resistance and develop counter-ideologies."

Church-based activism, however, is not equally accessible to all. As Brown and Brown (2003, p. 634) find, "church attendance is no longer an important predictor" of African American political behavior when "exposure to church-based political communication and church activism are taken into account." Because college-educated African Americans are more likely to attend politically active churches, Brown and Brown suggest that organized religion can explain part of the college participation gap among African Americans. Their research reinforces the idea that non-college educated people are less likely to hear political news or themes in church. Smetana and Metzger (2005) suggest a mechanism to explain the connection between spirituality and engagement among African Americans. They find that adolescents' spirituality is correlated with future community involvement, and suggest that this is because spirituality inspires adolescents to become involved with church activities, which promotes both future spirituality and civic engagement. More quantitative research is needed to explain the effect of church or spiritual participation on civic engagement, specifically controlling for socioeconomic factors such as race, income, or college experience.

Neighborhoods and Peer Groups

The extensive literature on social capital suggests that the density of collaborative relationships in communities and local norms of reciprocity and trust are crucial preconditions of civic action (e.g., Putnam 2000). In our focus groups, it was very rare to hear examples of collective action.

Sometimes participants said they distrusted individuals who were engaged in civic or political activities. For example, "The people that like to protest and say the most, why aren't they at work? They don't represent us, because the people that actually care are at work and don't have time to protest." One young man in Baltimore felt frustrated

with his community because neighbors would only come together in reaction to publicized emergencies: "They have banners up, 'Enough is Enough' and, you know, 'Take Back Our Neighborhood,' and they are handing out fliers and police are going door-to-door. And to me, … it is almost like an insult to me because people getting killed around me … and they didn't do nothing."

There was often an overall sense of mistrust of fellow residents, and sometimes, widespread criticism. Some respondents used that mistrust as an explanation for their reluctance to "give back" to neighbors, such as this male participant in Little Rock:

> *I never have problems at all, and so, they [parents] was like, you know, "Let's help these people out, let's give back." And I was like, "Why should we give back? It's their fault that they, you know, got into the situation, it's their fault that they start to go down the wrong path, so why should we help them go right back up? Why don't they figure their own way out?" And I still believe that now.*

Some participants explicitly rejected a norm of reciprocity. A young man in Richmond said, "My community don't do nothin' for me, so I ain't about to put effort into the community." One female participant in Little Rock even claimed not to have any "friends," but only "associates." The moderator asked the difference between these two terms. The respondent replied, "I ain't got no friends." Another female participant chimed in: "You can't trust everybody. … Associates are just like people you just talk to." Several respondents suggested that if they had decided to do something positive, such as cleaning up the streets, other residents would destroy their work.

The following exchange in Baltimore followed a word association activity that we facilitated, and suggested a close connection between distrust in government and distrust in other people:

> **Female Voice 4:** *It's a lot of words up there, but all of it means nobody really cares.*
> **Male Voice 3:** *I think most people obviously don't trust the government, and—*
> **Female Voice 3:** *[Interposing] That's right. Not at all.*
> **Male Voice 3:** *No.*
> **Male Voice 2:** *They proved that.*
> **Male Voice 3:** *I think the common good is for, like, us, and every man for themselves.*
> **Female Voice 4:** *Yeah, sure.*
> **Male Voice 3:** *I'm worried about me and my family, and that's—to be honest with you, I'm not worried about anybody else.*
> **Male Voice 2:** *That's true.*

Trust, efficacy, and civic engagement are known to correlate closely. National data indicate that youth with high levels of trust are more likely to become civically engaged (Kelly, 2009). For minority youth in particular, trust in government appears to be a significant predictor of civic engagement. The importance of interactions between youth and the government will be discussed below. Torney-Purta, Richardson and Barber (2004), and Kelly (2009) demonstrate that while trust is important for civic engagement among youth in general, it is particularly critical to engaging young people with fewer social and economic advantages. Thus it is troubling that many participants in our focus groups were explicitly mistrustful, and connected their mistrust to their reluctance to participate. One man in Richmond said: "As long as I see somebody tryin' to make some progress, that they tryin' to be about their word, I'll respect that. But if you just sayin' you're going to do this and sayin' you goin' do that and just doin' a lot of talkin' and not making no moves, how you gonna get somebody to follow that?"

The causal mechanisms that connect trust and engagement are heavily debated. Some argue that trust leads to participation (Uslaner & Brown, 2005), while others contend that participation fosters social trust. Stolle (2001) suggests that joining organizations or participating in civic activities increases trust. Brehm and Rahm (1997) argue that trust and participation are interdependent, but that causality flows more strongly from participation to interpersonal trust. Putnam (2000, p. 137) writes, "The causal arrows among civic involvement, reciprocity, honesty, and social trust are as tangled as well-tossed spaghetti." This summary is supported by research by Jennings and Stoker (2004) and Kwak, Shah, and Holbert (2004).

For these reasons, fostering social trust is an important object of study for scholars of civic engagement. Research on the subject is particularly relevant to engagement among non-college youth. Flanagan and Gallay (2008) examined the levels and predictors of trust among predominantly White working-class adolescents, and found that higher levels of parental education (the authors' measure of socioeconomic status) were associated with higher levels of social trust, trust in government, and trust in the "American Promise." Generally speaking, students in the study with non-European ethnic backgrounds reported lower levels of trust, and school climate and classroom experiences impacted young people's levels of trust. Higher education plans have been found to be highly correlated with current civic behavior, as well as trust in government and hope for the world's future (Syvertsen, Wray-Lake, Flanagan, Briddell, & Osgood, 2008). This result suggests that the relationship between education and civic engagement may be partly mediated by trust.

In their analysis of the 1999 IEA Civic Education Study of 14-year-olds in 5 democracies, Torney-Purta, Richardson and Barber (2004) found that an engaged citizenry requires a "threshold" level of trust, with schools being an important setting in which such trust is cultivated (as also noted by Newton, 2001). Students who trusted institutions exhibited more "civic behaviors," such as informed voting (when eligible) and volunteering. Trust was not a strong predictor of civic engagement compared to other variables in the study, suggesting that trust does not produce civic engagement on its own, but appears to be a critical prerequisite for its development.

Trust may also interact with demographic and contextual factors to affect civic engagement in ways that exacerbate disadvantage. Ross, Mirowsky and Pribesh (2001, p. 571) argue that civic engagement can suffer from "structural amplification," the process by which "conditions undermine the personal attributes that otherwise would moderate the undesirable consequences of those conditions." For example, endemic crime could sap a neighborhood of the trust and solidarity it would need to effectively combat the crime. The motivation youth feel to improve their communities can be affected by such a cycle (Solomon & Steinitz, 1979), or when "adversarial relationships" develop between neighborhoods and police. Ross et al. (2001, p. 569) write that "the very thing needed to protect disadvantaged residents from the negative effects of their environment—a sense of personal control—is eroded by that environment." Their finding is reinforced by comments in our focus groups, like this one from a young man in Richmond:

> *We could take some initiative ourselves, but we ain't in a position to take the first step. . . . I mean, put it out there and then see if it's a snowball effect. Don't just expect us to be able to go out there and like "da da da, do this, do that." People in better positions than us can take the initiative to just put it out there and just do a little somethin'.*

When individuals feel that those in power (e.g., the police) have abandoned them, and when they also become aware of a marked discrepancy between their goals and the resources necessary to achieve them, they develop a sense of powerlessness (Ross & Sastry, 1999). Under these conditions, individuals living in a hostile environment "may view those around them with suspicion, as enemies who will harm them rather than as allies who will help them" (Ross et al., 2001, p. 571). In such a situation, individuals may feel particularly reluctant to jeopardize their already scarce resources by trusting others. Consistent with this insight, Uslaner and Brown (2005) claim that economic inequality gives rise to psychological effects, such as a feeling of powerlessness, that lead to lower levels of community engagement. Again, we heard echoes in our focus groups, such as this remark from a male participant in Little Rock: "Also just feeling like even if you do voice your opinion it won't do any good—the suits are the ones who are gonna make all the decisions."

The opposite of powerlessness is a sense of efficacy. Vercelotti and Matto (2010, p. 7) define political efficacy as "an individual's sense of being able to understand politics, and the realization that one has the competence to influence government and politics." In practice, efficacy means different things to different people; qualitative studies of young people, for example, find that "making an impact" can mean a wide variety of things other than conventional participation, from increased awareness of community issues, to serving as a role model for others (O'Donoghue & Kirshner, 2003). Generally, researchers find that efficacy and civic engagement are positively correlated. Finkel (1985, p. 894) finds evidence for "the existence of reciprocal causation between 'external' efficacy [defined as "the belief that. . . the regime is responsive to attempted influence"] and electoral participation," because participation tends to give rise to the sense that the government is responsive, which inspires further participation. This cyclical aspect of efficacy is another reason to suspect that factors affecting young people's efficacy can give rise to major disparities in civic engagement in later adulthood.

A few respondents did indicate some degree of trust and efficacy and tried to urge those ideas on their peers in the focus groups. For example, a female participant in Little Rock suggested: "That's where some people get it wrong, sometimes your voice really do mean something. ... Everything counts, your voice counts just as much as anybody else's. . .The little guy has a voice too." But such remarks were atypical.

In sum, trust and efficacy are two of the prerequisites for meaningful civic participation. Each is related to the amount and type of educational experience that a young person has. Our focus groups found notably low levels of both.

Employment

Many participants were employed and spoke of how the workplace can be a setting for civic learning and engagement. Participants in our focus groups reported that they talked to their co-workers about community and social issues. They often connected having a job to feeling that they could be effective civic actors. When asked what would get them more involved, many respondents said jobs. Opportunities to combine employment and civic/political opportunities could be valuable.

One respondent emphasized the public value of her paid work in health care, while a different person talked about

being positive and contributing to others through her job at a car wash. But another participant replied that his paid work had negative social impact (he installed gambling machines).

Previous research finds that young people who are employed are more likely to be engaged in civic and political life. Oesterle, et al.(2004) find that volunteering is indirectly related to months of employment per year among young people. When civic engagement is defined broadly with many indicators, a cluster analysis shows that youth who are unemployed are more likely to be "civically alienated" (Kawashima-Ginsberg & CIRCLE Staff, 2011). They may be missing civic skills and networks that they would gain from employment, or it could be that they cannot find jobs because they lack civic skills and connections. Borghans, ter Weel, & Weinberg (2006) find that the labor-market value of "people skills" has increased rapidly in Britain, Germany, and the United States since 1970. "People skills" include, for example, preference for work that requires contact with people, and a preference for working in socially beneficial ways. People who lack those skills have lower odds of finding work. Jarvis, Montoya, and Mulvoy (2005, pp.19-23) find that civic skills have a strong relationship to political participation amongst youth who are not in college. They propose that work itself provides "mobilization opportunities," because individuals are recruited for political or civic activities in the workplace. Finlay, Wray-Lake and Flanagan (2010, p. 263) suggest a different explanation: "In higher education or work settings, young people may encounter more heterogeneous social groups, and as a result of these experiences, they may start to think more systematically about larger political and social structures that affect their lives."

In addition, Flanagan, Levine, and Settersten (2009) suggest that conventional markers of the transition to adulthood—holding a stable job, achieving financial independence from parents, owning a home, and having children—make one feel like a stakeholder in a community, and translate to engagement. As a result, the lengthened transition to adulthood may also delay engagement, and be pronounced for youth with no college experience, as unemployment has consistently been higher among youth with no college experience (Godsay, 2011).

An economic downturn may have a particular civic impact on young people with no college experience. Lim and Sander (2010) find that unemployment as a younger person can have long-term negative implications for civic participation. National service programs have been suggested as a way to combat youth unemployment (Boteach, Moses & Sagawa, 2009). The full-time and stipended nature of many of these programs makes them good training for permanent employment. More than two-thirds of AmeriCorps alumni reported that their participation "provided them with an advantage in finding a job" (Corporation for National and Community Service & Abt Associates, 2008). Specifically, AmeriCorps alumni (both state and national) are more likely to go into public service, and the effect is strongest among non-White alumni. See the text box for information on several large national programs.

Organizations linking job training, employment, and civic skills

Several national initiatives engage young people without college experience and young people of color in civic activities. Some of these initiatives are not solely focused on the development of civic skills, but also seek to help young people enter the workforce, obtain a GED (or higher education), and otherwise make educational or economic progress. The appendix presents a full scan of organizations, and below are examples of programs that have shown to be effective.

The YouthBuild Model: "In YouthBuild programs, low-income young people ages 16 to 24 work full-time for 6 to 24 months toward their GEDs or high school diplomas while learning job skills by building affordable housing in their communities" (YouthBuild USA.) Although the primary component of the YouthBuild experience is job training, civic engagement is a part of the program's curriculum and philosophy. With the development of leadership in the YouthBuild program, young people gain the skills and confidence to participate in their communities. According to data from a YouthBuild evaluation, "there is evidence of some impact [of the program] particularly with respect to voting and participating in community organizations or volunteer work" (Hahn, Leavitt, Horvat & Davis 2004, p. 23). For example, a 2004 YouthBuild survey found that the program's graduates were 19 percentage points more likely to be registered voters than average members of their age group. A 1997 study of YouthBuild and seven similar programs found that graduates were much more likely to be employed and less likely to be arrested than a control

Local Government

Another setting in which young people develop as citizens can be a municipality or other local political jurisdiction. Gimpel Lay, & Schuknecht (2003) and many other authors find that the way the local government is run, the quality of its services, and young people's interactions with officials matter for their civic development.

Interaction with the Criminal Justice System

For participants in our focus groups, the police emerged as the most salient face of local government. Almost always, the police were described in negative ways, as a problem rather than as a solution. For example a male participant in Baltimore said, "I am just saying, like in general, you can't call the police—even if a car gets vandalized, you can't call them. Because they will come around and harass you. I have had that happen too." A young woman in Richmond said, "Instead of the police doing what they gotta do, they harassing: running over children, in the projects, chasing people, actually stumbling over children, children falling on the ground and getting hurt, and they don't even care."

In recalling organized political activity in their neighborhoods, several respondents said that the police had caused it to end. One young man in Little Rock recalled:

> *They wanted to close down all the sports activities, any type of thing, because of violence that was in the school. So we wouldn't have no kind of music, sports, or anything. So everybody in our class, we wanted to go out to the field to hold up posters to try to get many people to sign a petition to keep it going. Well, it turned out to be a riot once the police got there, because they wanted everyone to leave. But we said that we exercising our first amendment. Everyone there wind up in jail.*

A male respondent in Baltimore drew a broader conclusion:

> *Democracy is more so where everybody has an opinion. Like you got some places, it's dictatorships where the people don't have any opinion on nothing. . . .The fact that we can sit in this room and speak out about the government is democracy. But I think it's all convenient. Because like everybody said here they had a situation where the police have come into your neighborhoods and told you all to go back in the house or do this or do that. You know, so that's not democracy.*

Ethnographic research suggests that young people in urban communities feel a sense of civic and political disempowerment (Solomon & Steinitz, 1979; Stepick & Stepick, 2002). Scholars note that hostility toward authority, combined with a sense that young people could have very limited potential impact, deters them from being engaged in their communities (O'Donoghue, & Kirshner, 2003; Rodgers, 1974). Interacting with the criminal justice system is one important way in which such a sense of powerlessness and antagonism to authority is generated.

group. African American men who graduated from the program were "more than four times as likely to have voted than their counterparts in a control group" (Jastrzab, Blomquist, Masker & Orr, 1997, p. 19).

Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP): Quantum Opportunities, an after-school program, was primarily designed to increase high school graduation rates and was found to do so. The program was delivered through community-based organizations, which were responsible for case management and mentoring, educational activities, developmental activities, and community service. An evaluation of the QOP program found that the program's effects on civic engagement persisted: 6 months after graduation, 41 percent of QOP participants had given time to a non-profit, charitable, school, or community group, compared to 11 percent of the control group (Hahn, Leavitt & Aaron, 1994).

AmeriCorps: AmeriCorps is a government program that gives young people the opportunity to serve their community by contributing time to a non-profit. Though AmeriCorps is not specifically designed as a program for non-college youth, a 1999 survey found that 70.2 percent of participants did not have a bachelor's degree upon entering the program. The same evaluation of AmeriCorps suggested that the experience had a persistent impact on participants' engagement: participation in the program "resulted in statistically significant positive impacts on members' connection to community, knowledge about problems facing their community, [and] participation in community-based activities" two years after service (Jastrzab, Giordono, Chase, Valente, Hazlett, LaRock, Richard, 2004, p. 1). A comparison group of individuals who inquired about AmeriCorps but did not enroll over the same period showed no such increase.

For many youth in low-income communities, although not all, the criminal justice system has a significant effect on their own lives. In their analysis of the "Political Consequences of the Carceral State,'" Weaver and Lerman (2010, p. 817) show that "the scale of citizen contact with the American criminal justice system is now unmatched in modern history." Western, Kleykamp, and Rosenfeld (2004, p. 774) find that "young high school dropouts are five to twenty times more likely to be in prison or jail than young men who have been to college." They calculate that incarceration rates for non-college-educated men jumped from 1.6 percent in 1980 to 5.4 percent in 2000 (Western, et al., 2004, p. 777). Western and Pettit (2010) show that this rise continued through 2008. Although scholars dispute the cause of this rise, the reality that more and more non-college youth are interacting with the criminal justice system makes the effects of these interactions important to understand.

Young men in urban areas, and especially those with less formal education, are particularly likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system (Weaver & Lerman, 2010). Lopez and Livingston (2009, p. 7) specifically note that young Latinos are subject to this phenomenon. Latinos ages 18-29 are nearly twice as likely as older Latinos (19 percent versus 10 percent) to report having been on probation or parole, and 32% of younger Latinos (against 19 percent of those over 30) "say they or an immediate family member were questioned by the police in the previous five years."

Interaction with the criminal justice system depresses civic participation. Pacheco and Plutzer (2008, p. 586) find that "blacks who were arrested have [voter] turnout levels 21 percent lower than those who were never arrested." In their analysis of youth in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health and the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, Weaver and Lerman (2010, p. 822) control for many demographic factors and include analysis of "measures of individual propensity for offending." They find that increasing contact with the criminal justice system decreases the likelihood of civic and political participation, to the extent that "even a minor encounter with the police that did not result in arrest is associated with a reduced likelihood of turning out in an election" (Weaver & Lerman, 2010, p. 824). Similarly, Fairdosi's (undated, p. 10) analysis of the Black Youth Project Survey data finds that "the act of being arrested has a negative and statistically significant impact on almost all indicators of political efficacy" that are measured in the dataset, although the author notes that these findings do not take into consideration political and personal propensities. Manza and Uggen (2006) find a similar dynamic with respect to efficacy and trust in their analysis of longitudinal data from St. Paul, Minnesota.

Incarceration can affect youth participation even more dramatically than arrests. In many states, citizens who are convicted of felonies lose the right to vote, denying them access to a basic form of political participation. In our focus groups, numerous participants noted that they were ex-felons, and that legally they were not allowed to participate. One male respondent in Richmond said, "With these felonies. . . you can't do nothin' with felonies." The Sentencing Project (Felony disenfranchisement laws in the United States, 2011, p. 1) reports that as of December 2011, "48 states and the District of Columbia prohibit inmates from voting while incarcerated for a felony offense," "35 states prohibit people on parole from voting, and 30 states exclude people on probation as well." "Four states deny the right to vote to all persons with felony convictions, even after they have completed their sentences. Eight others disenfranchise certain categories of ex-offenders and/or permit application for restoration of rights for specified offenses after a waiting period" (Felony disenfranchisement laws in the United States, 2011, p. 1) . Additionally, Manza and Uggen's analysis (2006) of efficacy and trust finds that youth who were incarcerated are less likely (when compared to their peers who have been arrested but not convicted or not arrested at all) than their peers to have trust in government or believe in their own ability to affect the government ("efficacy").

Incarceration also has an indirect effect on a person's civic propensities. For example, Freeman (1991) found that the rise in incarceration of low-income young men out of school over the course of the 1980s was related to lower rates of employment after jail (or probation). Western and Pettit (2010, p. 13) analyze the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and find "that serving time in prison was associated with a 40 percent reduction in earnings, and with reduced job tenure, reduced hourly wages, and higher unemployment." This is particularly significant given the literature on the "transition to adulthood," which indicates that work and the workplace expose young people to skills, resources, people, and opportunities that provide a gateway to civic life.

The relationship between engagement and the criminal justice system runs two ways, as Uggen and Janikula (1999, p. 344) demonstrate. Using longitudinal data from the Youth Development Study in St. Paul, the authors examine civic participation as a preventive force against arrest and interaction with the criminal justice system. The authors show that "only 3 percent of the volunteers were arrested in the four years following high school, compared to 11 percent of the non-volunteers." Controlling for "extralegal factors that may affect arrest, antisocial propensities, prosocial attitudes, commitment to conventional lines of action, and previous prosocial behavior," they find that high school juniors and seniors who volunteered were as little as one-third as likely as non-volunteers to be arrested in early adulthood (Uggen & Janikula, 1999, p. 355).

Uggen and colleagues also focus on re-entry after incarceration as a particularly critical time with respect to what they call "civic reintegration" (Uggen, Manza, & Behrens, 2004, p. 283). The authors argue that "the stigma of a felony conviction imposes additional barriers to successful adult role transition," and that the vital distinction that governs reintegration is "a generalized self-concept as a deviant or conforming citizen." Although Uggen et al. are not testing competing hypotheses, their model suggests that the civic effects of incarceration are not simply due to constraints on resources or opportunities; being categorized as a felon affects one's self-understanding. Overall, the literature indicates that aside from personal traits, interaction with the criminal justice system—being stopped by police, arrest, incarceration—effects young people's civic efficacy and behavior afterwards. Participants in our focus groups shared this view.

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Government Assistance and Civic Participation

Government assistance programs and other forms of government aid did not emerge as major themes in our focus groups. However, participants or their parents and guardians could have interacted with assistance agencies in the past. Data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services show that in the 2008 fiscal year, only 4.5 percent of adults receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families had education experience beyond high school; more than half of recipients were under the age of 30 ("Characteristics and financial circumstances of TANF recipients—FY 2008").

Verba, et al. (1995) showed that participants in means-tested economic benefit programs (Aid to Families with Dependent Children [AFDC], Medicaid, food stamps, subsidized housing) were less likely than both recipients of non-means-tested benefits and the general population to be voters, campaign workers, campaign contributors, protesters, community activists, or board members. This dynamic was sustained when controlling for a wide variety of factors. The authors also found "that among those with no college education, the recipients of means-tested benefits are less active than the recipients of the non-means-tested benefits" (examples of the latter included Social Security, Medicare, veteran's benefits, and educational loans) (Verba, et al. , 1995, p. 220).

Swartz, Blackstone, Uggen, and McLaughlin (2009, pp. 647-648, p .656) apply a similar analytic framework to the Youth Development Study, using voter files to analyze the impact of means-tested programs on voter turnout and volunteering. The authors find that "those who received welfare are less likely to vote than non-recipients or first-tier government assistance recipients," and that the same is true controlling for demographics, employment and family status, and "social psychological factors." Controlling for respondents' turnout in 1994, receiving welfare in 1996 was strongly associated with a lower likelihood of voting in 2000, suggesting that welfare's impact on participation is both causal and long-lasting. Recipients of "first-tier government assistance," such as disability or unemployment insurance, however, were not less likely to vote than non-recipients, and receiving means-tested benefits was not associated with a lower likelihood of volunteering. These facts suggest that "welfare recipients who may experience alienation from the political culture" because of the intrusive and disempowering nature of means-testing "appear not to experience similar disengagement from their own communities."

Joe Soss (1999) supports this finding, and puts it in the context of a "political learning" theory. In contrast to Social Security Disability Insurance program participants, AFDC participants reported much lower levels of efficacy. Soss (1999, p. 372) adds that "if clients' attitudes toward government come from their direct experiences with government (and clients believe they do), there is little reason to expect the normal relationship between external efficacy and political action to be attenuated for welfare recipients." The experiences that participants have with the program and program staff influence what participants think about the government generally, and their ability to affect its workings.

Campaigns and Politics, Including the 2008 Presidential Campaign

Citizens of the United States are members of large communities, including the whole nation-state, that are governed by elected officials. Campaigns and elections provide one point of connection between citizens and the government and are important venues for civic engagement.

A few participants in our focus groups had worked on local political campaigns or had tried to persuade other people to vote. On the whole, however, participants felt disconnected from politics and power. Even local issues that would arise in campaigns seemed completely separate from their own daily lives and identities.

Several respondents said that voting does nothing, and that they lacked power because they are were not politicians. A female participant in Little Rock said, "Why should I waste my time and effort into voting and put a little checkmark—X's or bubbles—to put one man in control of a whole country, who can't really control the whole country. Y'all ain't doin' nothin' for Arkansas. . . . Arkansas is still the 'hood."

On one occasion, a young man in Baltimore used the phrase "it's all politics" to indicate that politics is both remote from people like them and their everyday lives, and not susceptible to their influence. Another male respondent in Baltimore made a distinction between "politicians" and "other citizens," saying he had loyalty for citizenry but not for politicians.

Often they indicated that politicians are older, White men who know very little about their experiences. Several participants spoke favorably of Barack Obama and identified with him as an African American. For example, a male participant in Richmond said, "It just wasn't the same old, plain old boring Democrat and boring Republican. . . .That just boring. Him being African American caught our attention, it made us listen to him." But sometimes Obama also seemed to come from a very remote background. In a focus group conducted in Baltimore shortly before the 2008 election, a young man reflected on both presidential candidates:

> *And they both come from the same fire, you know, went to all the great education and both come from money for the most part. I mean Barack Obama not so much as John McCain, but they're both from upper class, middle upper class families. And when you're 24-years-old and you got thousands of dollars in credit card debt and you can barely afford to pay gas and everything costs it seems like a million dollars, you know, you can't afford anything. And you have these politicians who sit up there, who get flown around the country in private jets, and probably waste more money in a day than we could make in day. Just drive around saying hi to people, I mean when they could be actually working on issues, just because they want to get their name out there. There's no connection at all.*

Many respondents suggested that politics was not understandable but was purposefully geared towards people with more education. Several said that the language of politics was confusing, and one respondent suggested that you need a dictionary to understand it. A few said that they would like to learn about politics, but in ways that related to their own lives.

Respondents did not think that the political system had done any good for their communities, and they did not expect much from it. Interviewed before the 2008 election, one female respondent in Baltimore said, "I don't care if Obama getting it [the presidency], it's going to be like that too, you know. It's going to be the same way." Some respondents said that they didn't understand why the U.S. government spent so much internationally instead of dealing with problems at home.

Some participants felt certain that no politicians would ever come to their neighborhoods, although a few had interacted with politicians on some level. They perceived a lack of action, mostly the result of politicians not following-up on issues discussed in campaigns. These negative experiences were linked to negative perceptions of government in general. For example, some participants reported that elections were fixed, predetermined, or of no use, as politicians were only out for themselves, such as the male participant in Baltimore who said, "I just see so many things in a negative way and, like, the politicians are like some of the dirtiest people in the world, in my opinion."

Some respondents mentioned feeling alienated from politics because of the incivility they saw among politicians. Participants repeatedly discussed being frustrated with the uncompromising nature of politics and political parties. One respondent related violence to politics: when asked to describe the picture she had chosen to represent "politics" (an activity we used in Baltimore), the respondent said she thought of it because "they got the riot police outside just waiting to like beat some butt, waiting to kill someone."

The 2008 election was unusual for many focus group participants. With few exceptions, they said they had paid more attention to it than to any other campaign. A majority of all the political actions that participants reported were related to that election. Some said that they had paid more attention to the 2008 election because a Black man was running for president. For example, a young man in Richmond recalled: "I don't know what he stood for or nothing, I just know he was Black." But others seemed to think that Barack Obama's race had been overemphasized. A male respondent in Richmond said, "It was more than just him being a Black president, 'cause Colin Powell Black and he a Republican, y'all. . . . [Their] heads going way different directions. It was more than just being Black; that's just what caught attention."

Some respondents saw affinities to Obama that went beyond his race, like the male participant in Richmond who said:

The biggest thing that made me like Barack is that he started out like in the trenches of Southside of Chicago as a community activist. . . .You already know he got a feel for the people and he in tune with reality. That was the biggest thing besides him being Black. 'Cause I wouldn't have voted for Jesse Jackson or Al Sharpton 'cause I don't think they would have been the best thing fo' the country as a whole, you know, President gotta bring the country together.

Several respondents recalled that they had been motivated to vote in 2008 by a sense of duty. One young man in Baltimore said, "So right, I am going to vote this time just because I feel like it is the right thing to do. But at the same time, it is not because I am involved in politics or anything like that." Another male participant in Little Rock felt that voting in 2008 was a duty, and more people should have participated:

We should have looked at it like, this is our first time to make something positive, basically. People look at it like, "Hmmm, I wish I could do such-and-such, I want to do such-and-such" but that could be your first thing to take: "I'm gonna go vote." That's like, really, the best way to voice your opinion in the world and people don't realize that.

Many respondents we interviewed after the election were frustrated, saying that their economic situation was not improving. Several were hesitant to criticize President Obama, because he had to negotiate with Congress and could not make things happen alone. The 2008 election really represented one of the few instances of political or collective action that we heard, but it still left many respondents cynical about politics as a whole, such as a female participant from Little Rock who said: "By voting--every year has been the same to me, ever since I even learned about any type of election. And, nothing's really changed. The 'hood is still the 'hood, you know what I'm saying? People say they want to do fundraisers, they want to, you know, uplift the neighborhood. They're not uplifting nothing but probably the money in their pockets...so why should I vote?"

Racial, Ethnic, and Class Identity

Young people do not only belong to families, neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, and political jurisdictions. They are also conscious of belonging to large identity groups, such as races or social classes.

Participants in our focus groups were predominantly but not exclusively African American, and were likely to be working-class or poor. It is important to note that our focus group facilitators were mostly Asian American or White with college backgrounds, although we worked with African American co-facilitators in some of the groups. Some participants explicitly cited their own race or class identity. For example, this female respondent in Little Rock felt that African American history conveyed a responsibility to vote:

Even though we said we don't like [studying] history, OK, all of us are African American and our ancestors didn't get the opportunity to vote, like we have that opportunity, and I feel like we should take part in that. They fought for that, so we should do that.

Several respondents noted that the Obama campaign had inspired them because the candidate was African American. A young man in Little Rock said, "He's the first Black President, that shit inspire every single Black person. To come from all those years of suppression to being the leader of a whole nation. . . that in itself speaks for itself." On the other hand, they often cited racism as a personal challenge. One young woman in Richmond recalled, "I did have a job, but I was fired because I was black—I never ever, ever felt so bad in my life."

"Even though we said we don't like [studying] history, OK, all of us are African American and our ancestors didn't get the opportunity to vote ... They fought for that, so we should do that."

Racial and ethnic identities can discourage or encourage engagement, depending on how they are presented and received. Zaff, et al. (2008, p. 48) find that the presence of "ethnicity-related activities, such as studying . . . ethnic traditions and history," is positively associated with civic engagement. Parents who consider their race or ethnicity to be important, and who have participated in ethnicity-related political activities (such as civil rights rallies), are more likely to have children who engage in civic activities. Zaff and colleagues acknowledge that African American parents with higher levels of education are more likely to be involved in ethnicity-related political activities, and consequently have children who are more engaged, but they argue that socioeconomic status does not solely explain the relationship between ethnic socialization and future participation. More research is needed on the relationship between racial and ethnic socialization and civic engagement among low-income, non-college-educated young people.

Recommendations

Although this study generally reinforces previous research on youth civic engagement, it suggests directions for both research and practice. These recommendations came from this research and our conversations with researchers, practitioners, and other stakeholders. Our conversations resulted in a long list of types of organizations and institutions that could impact the engagement of non-college youth. Here we address the groups that have the most potential to help:

Researchers should broaden their definition of civic engagement, especially to include informal helping behaviors, and should define civic knowledge to include facts and ideas obtained from ordinary life experience. Future research should focus on whether these informal forms of learning and engagement provide entry points to formal civic activities and political power, and should investigate how non-college youth specifically are using technology and social media for engagement. In addition, researchers should develop measures to document people's experiences with civic institutions and more fully understand pathways and potential pipelines for engagement.

Scholars should also further investigate the impact of policing and incarceration on young people's civic engagement, as well as how youth respond to and conceptualize opportunities to combine employment with civic action.

More research should also be conducted on subgroups of non-college youth whom we did not engage at all, including those in rural areas.

Schools should provide civic education opportunities for all youth and use interactive pedagogies, including discussion, with young people not on track to attend college. All students need opportunities to learn and practice skills like deliberation, research, and organizing people. Schools and teachers should bring more current issues into the classroom and draw connections between course content and current issues. Engagement activities connected to school should be contextualized, meaningful, and empowering. Teachers and advisors should tell youth why they are doing what they are doing, so their activities do not seem random and unnecessary, to give framing and purpose to the students' work.

Youth programs in schools and communities should provide opportunities to draw connections between individually focused activities and social causes and issues. Youth are already discussing issues, and that may be a leverage point for talking about action. Schools should teach politics in a more understandable way, connected to experience. It is not clear from our research that non-college youth will be motivated to organize on behalf of non-college youth as a group. Instead, youth workers should talk to them about what issues and identities resonate with them most.

Young people care about making a contribution, even if it is small. Youth programs should make clear in recruitment what impact participants can make. They should highlight examples of changes that have been made in the community, even if small. They should provide opportunities for youth to meet adults who hold formal positions in government, or who work in activist organizations.

Civic and political programs should frame civic skills as job skills and point out to youth the types of available jobs that contribute to community building and making positive change. Adults who counsel youth on employment should expose youth to a broader range of job opportunities, including those that focus on community service and social change. These programs should help youth connect the national and local level, especially in preparation for election years.

Nonprofit groups of all kinds should ask non-college young people to participate in their activities. They should recruit youth by telling them about opportunities to engage in their communities and the benefits of participation. Nonprofits can consider a system of financial incentives that encourage participation and allow youth to spend more time on engagement. They should provide youth with opportunities to participate in decision-making within the program or organization so participants understand why a particular strategy is being used and develop a sense of ownership.

In particular, non-college young people are interested in working with children or improving schools, and many already are doing so in informal ways. Providing more opportunities for them to serve younger people would be beneficial.

Policymakers should support programs that offer (1) recruitment and incentives to participate; (2) safe places for debate and discussion; (3) opportunities to learn skills that are valuable in both civic life and employment; and (4) the chance to improve communities for the next generation. CIRCLE's recent evaluation (CIRCLE, 2012) found all these elements in YouthBuild, which emerges as one model of the kind of program that should be more strongly supported.

Methodology

This study was an attempt to go beyond survey information, to learn through qualitative methods how non-college youth relate to civic and political life. Survey data has provided insights into the behavior of non-college youth, but surveys can miss certain forms of action (as we found) and are not ideal for answering the question "Why?" (Andolina, Jenkins, Keeter, & Zukin, 2002). In focus groups, we listened to the youth themselves and asked them to reflect on their own experiences, choices and what they saw as barriers to engagement.

The literature cited throughout the report often describes non-college youth, low-income youth, or both. However, the most helpful qualitative research has tighter bounds. In our case, we collected data in four urban areas in the Northeast and Southeast United States: Baltimore (Fall 2008); Little Rock (June 2010); Lowell (April 2010) and Richmond (April/May 2010). These cities were chosen because of proximity and the work of partner organizations, and to provide some regional diversity.

CIRCLE identified the 121 participants who participated in a total of 20 focus groups in one of two ways: by asking a local community-based organization to recruit, or by employing a local market research firm. For eight groups (one in Lowell, , two in Little Rock, two in Richmond, and three in Baltimore) participants were identified by a leader from a local community-based organization. With the exception of the Lowell group, these youth were not formally involved in any youth civic organization.

The majority of participants were identified by market research firms, who were asked to find youth who were between the ages of 18-25, were out of school, had never enrolled in college, and resided in ZIP codes with comparably low average income for that city (based on federal data).

Focus groups were facilitated by CIRCLE staff (Asian American and White women), and on four occasions co-facilitated by male community members. In every focus group, participants were given information regarding the purpose of the project and were asked to keep their names confidential by providing pseudonyms for the discussion. They were told the discussion was going to be recorded, and signed an informed consent form to confirm their understanding of the project, their rights, and their willingness to participate and be recorded. Food was provided in every group, and participants received a gift certificate or cash for participation. Each group lasted about 90 minutes. Focus groups were conducted in a central location to the zip codes of the participants. Often this was a community-based organization.

Prior to conducting the first focus groups in Baltimore in 2008, CIRCLE developed a focus group protocol based on prompts, activities and questions adapted from previous qualitative research. This protocol was then approved by the University of Maryland, College Park Institutional Review Board (IRB). These prompts were mostly broad questions to explore topics and start conversations, but some questions were informed by previous research and theory. For example, past research suggests that civic education can play a large role in a young person's civic development, so we asked about young people's experiences with social studies classes and their recommendations for civic education. Following the Baltimore interviews, CIRCLE edited the interview protocol, including the election-related questions, because the 2008 election had concluded. Focus groups in the other cities using this revised protocol were approved by the IRB at Tufts University. At the conclusion of every group, participants filled out a brief form to share their demographic information.

CIRCLE used an inductive approach for coding and analyzing the focus group data. Through the inductive approach, we aimed to "generate meaning from the data [that we] collected in the field," rather than seek data to confirm an existing hypothesis (Creswell, 2009, p. 9). CIRCLE used the following process for coding and analyzing the focus group. After data collection, a coding scheme was created based on both a comprehensive literature review of factors that influence the civic engagement of non-college youth, as well as listening to the focus group audio for the first time. The original coding scheme included approximately 280 codes.

The data for this project were transcripts of audio files and the audio recording files themselves, which were then coded and analyzed using Nvivo, a qualitative data analysis software package.

They coded a full focus group to identify areas of disagreement, using all 280 codes. The areas of disagreement included: misinterpretation of codes, technical issues, implied or hypothetical statements, missed/forgotten codes.

Two coders used the following process to achieve an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability:

The team combined codes and simplified the coding scheme. However, the coding scheme was still too complex for consistent analysis and achieving sufficient inter-rater reliability. The coding scheme was then reduced from 280 codes to 78 codes. Coder notes and annotations allowed for consistent coding while retaining detailed analysis.

Two coders went through an iterative process, by repeating the process of coding half-hour segments from nine focus groups, comparing how each had coded the segment, listening to the segment again to confirm how it should be coded, and meeting to discuss areas of disagreement.

The two coders achieved a sufficient inter-rater reliability multiple times (in several points during the coding process). Coders achieved substantial agreement of .70 or higher in Cohen's Kappa coefficient (Cohen, 1960). Kappa agreement of 0.7 or above is considered "good" agreement level, according to Landis and Koch (1977).

After coding was completed, CIRCLE staff analyzed the data using NVivo analysis tools. Additional analysis was done with the coders' notes and annotations, which provided more detail for some of the coding in NVivo.

CIRCLE staff met to discuss frequency and interaction of codes (generated from NVivo reports). This analysis was used to develop and understand themes throughout the focus groups.

Participant Demographics

Question/Answers	Percent of Total
Race/Ethnicity	
White	17%
Black	69%
Asian	2%
Latino/Hispanic	3%
Other	7%
Prefer not to answer/Don't Know	1%

Employment Status	
Working full-time	31%
Working part-time	17%
Temp job	5%
Not employed	47%
Don't Know	0%

Marital Status	
Single, never married	88%
Married	5%
Divorced	0%
Separated	3%
Widowed	0%
Living as Married	4%
Don't Know	0%

Additional Participant Demographic Info*

Question/Answers	Percent of Total
Highest Level of Education Completed:	
9th Grade	9%
10th Grade	7%
11th Grade	21%
High School or Equivalent (GED)	57%
Up to one year of college	4%
2 years of college	0%
College Degree (BA or BS)	0%
Graduate School	1%

Credit at any of these institutions:	
University or 4-year college	1%
Community College	3%
Vocational	7%
Adult Education Center	24%

Do you have any children?	
Yes, have children (live with and regular contact)	42%
Yes, do not live with me and don't have regular contact	6%
No, I don't have any children	51.5%

How often do you attend religious services?	
Never	20%
A few times a year	38%
Once or twice a month	17%
Almost every week	9%
Every week	7.5%
Not sure/Refused	9%

**The demographic information in this table reflects participants from three of the four cities, excluding Baltimore.*

Section 4:

Organizational Scan

To better understand what civic opportunities are available through community-based organizations for youth out of high school, CIRCLE conducted a scan of the field. It should be noted that this scan is a sampling and should not be considered a comprehensive list. CIRCLE used the following criteria: organizations must explicitly seek to increase positive civic outcomes and work with youth who are 18-29 and not in college. It is important to recognize that several of these organizations work with youth who are of high school age but not in high school (such as adolescents who have dropped out). We did not include organizations in our scan that primarily work with high school students.

Organization Name	Location	Programmatic Geographic Location	Target Demographic	Demographic Age Range	Type of Activities	Structure	URL
Academy for College Excellence (formerly known as Digital Bridge Academy)	California	West	Under-prepared (for college) and at-risk students	Over 18	Technology education; research project on social justice issue	Classes	http://www.cabrillo.edu/academics/digitalbridge/index.html
African Center for Community Empowerment	Queens, NY	Mid-Atlantic	Urban Youth, Youth of Color, At-risk Youth	Youth, not defined	Dance/Performance, Academic, Mentoring, Technology, Job Training/Job Skills/Career Exploration, Community Service	After School	http://www.africancenterusa.org/site.php?action=home
African Federation Inc.	New York, NY	National	Refugee Youth, Immigrant Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Mentoring, Leadership, Environmental, Community Organizing, Job Training/Job Skills/Career Exploration, Community Service	Selection/Application Process	http://www.africanfed.org/index.php
Animating Democracy	Washington, DC	National	Urban Youth, High School Youth, Low-Income/Working Class Youth, Youth of Color, At-risk Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Studio Art, Dance/Performance, Academic, Community Organizing, Community Service, Performing/Visual Arts	Provides Funding and Direct Services	http://www.americansforthearts.org/animatingdemocracy/
Art in Action	San Francisco, CA	West	Youth from historically disenfrancised communities	Youth from historically disenfrancised communities	Studio Art, Press/Media, Dance/Performance, Leadership	Classes, camp	http://artinactionworld.org
Asian American Civic Association	Boston, MA	New England	Urban Youth, High School Youth, Youth of Color, At-risk Youth, Immigrant Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Mentoring, Leadership, Community Organizing, Job Training/Job Skills/Career Exploration	Classes, Part of an educational program, like a GED course	http://aaca-boston.org/
Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership	Oakland, CA	West	Low-Income/Working Class Youth, Youth of Color	12 to 20	Leadership, Community Organizing, Community Service, cultural arts activism	weekly meetings	www.aypal.org
Black Girls Rock, Inc.	New York, NY	National	Youth of Color, At-risk Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Dance/Performance, Leadership	Classes, Camp	http://blackgirlsrockinc.com/
Black Youth Project	Multiple	National	Youth of Color, At-risk Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Press/Media	Online Blog	http://www.blackyouthproject.com
Black Youth Vote	Washington, D.C.	National	Youth of Color	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Press/Media, Leadership, Community Organizing		http://ncbcp.org/programs/byv/

Organization Name	Location	Programmatic Geographic Location	Target Demographic	Demographic Age Range	Type of Activities	Structure	URL
Bridge Over Troubled Waters	Boston, MA	New England	Out of School Youth (Dropped out of HS), At-risk Youth	14-24	Academic, Technology, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration	Youth/ Community center	http://www.bridgeotw.org/index.html
Center for Community Change	Washington, DC	National	Urban Youth, Out of School Youth (Dropped out of HS), High School Youth, Low-Income/Working Class Youth, Youth of Color, Unprepared or Underprepared for College, HS Grads who have not gone to college, Immigrant Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Leadership, Community Organizing		http://www.communitychange.org/
Center for Teen Empowerment	Roxbury, MA	New England	Urban Youth, High School Youth, Low-Income/Working Class Youth, Youth of Color, At-risk Youth	Over 18 (18-21)	Mentoring, Leadership, Community Organizing, Community Service	Multi-year, Participants are paid in some way	http://www.teenempowerment.org
City Youth Now	San Francisco, CA	West	At-risk Youth, Youth in or coming out of juvenile/justice system	Pre-teens, Teens, High School Age, Over 18	City Youth Now supports youth in the San Francisco foster care and juvenile justice systems by providing funds for services and programs that promote stability and personal growth.		http://www.cityyouthnow.org/
Civic Justice Corps	Washington, DC	National	Urban Youth, Youth in or coming out of Juvenile Court/ Justice System, Youth of Color, At-risk Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Leadership, Community Service	Team/Corps/ Group	http://www.corpsnetwork.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59&Itemid=77
Dynamy, Inc.	Worcester, MA	New England	At-risk Youth, Unprepared or Underprepared for College, Immigrant Youth, Low-Income/Working Class Youth, Refugee Youth	High School Age, Over 18	Internship Year (gap year/semester program); Youth Academy (four-year leadership and college access program)	Internship, Residential	http://www.dynamy.org
Eagle Eye Institute	Somerville, MA	New England	Urban Youth, Low-Income/ Working Class Youth, Youth of Color	Teens, High School Age, Over 18	Academic, Leadership, Environmental, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration, Community Service	Team/Corps/ Group, Classes, Residential	http://www.eagleeyeinstitute.org/index.php
Elementz	Cincinnati, OH	Midwest	Urban Youth	Teens, High School Youth, Over 18 (14-24)	Studio Art, Dance/ Performance	Classes	http://www.elementz.org/
HerShe	Los Angeles, CA	West	High School Youth, HS Grads who have not gone to college, Female Foster Children	13-21	Dance/Performance, Academic, Mentoring	After School	http://www.hershegroup.org/HomePage
Hyde Square Task Force	Jamaica Plain, MA	New England	Urban Youth, Unprepared or Underprepared for College		Studio Art, Dance/ Performance, Academic, Leadership	After School, Youth/ Community center	http://www.hydesquare.org/

Organization Name	Location	Programmatic Geographic Location	Target Demographic	Demographic Age Range	Type of Activities	Structure	URL
Iowa Pride Network	Des Moines, Iowa	Midwest	High School Youth, LGBTQ youth	High School Age,Teens, Over 18	Leadership, Community Organizing	Youth/ Community center, on-campus centers	http://www.iowapride network.org/
Kids Off the Block	Chicago, IL	Midwest	Youth in or coming out of Juvenile Court/Justice System, Low-Income/ Working Class Youth, At-risk Youth		Dance/Performance, Academic, Sports, Mentoring	Youth/ Community center, Residential	http://www.kidsofftheblock.org/index.html
Las Artes Arts & Education Center	Tucson, AZ	Southwest	Out of School Youth (Dropped out of HS)	High School Age, Over 18	Studio Art, Community Art/ Public Art	Classes	http://www.pima.gov/ced/CR/LasArtes.html
Latin American Youth Center - DC	Washington, DC	New England	Low-Income/Working Class Youth, Youth of Color, Immigrant Youth	High School Age, Teens	Studio Art, Press/ Media, Academic, Community Organizing	After School, Youth/ Community center	http://www.layc-dc.org/index.php/programs/advocacy.html
Lower East Side Girls Club	NYC, NY	Mid-Atlantic	Urban Youth, High School Youth, Low-Income/Working Class Youth, Youth of Color, At-risk Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Studio Art, Dance/ Performance, Academic, Mentoring, Technology, Leadership, Environmental, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration	Multi-year, Youth/ Community center, Classes	http://www.girlsclub.org/
NAACP Youth and College 100 Remix	Baltimore, MD	National	Youth of Color	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Academic, Leadership, Community Organizing		http://www.naacp.org/youth/college/
National African American Clergy Network	National	National	Black Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Community Organizing	Network of clergy	N/A
National Guard Youth Challenge	USA	National	Out of School Youth (Dropped out of HS), At-risk Youth	High School Age, Over 18	Academic, Leadership, job skills	Residential	http://www.ngycp.org/site/
New Door Ventures	San Francisco, CA	West	At-risk Youth, Unprepared or Underprepared for College, HS Grads who have not gone to college	14-21	Mentoring, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration, Community Service	Internship, Apprenticeship, Classes	http://www.newdoor.org/
New Mexico Forum for Youth in Community	Albuquerque, NM	Southwest	High-risk, gang-associated youth.	Youth no specific ages given	Civic training, political advocacy, leadership development	This org. goes out to local organizations to conduct trainings.	http://www.nmforum foryouth.org/index.htm
Northwest Piedmont Service Corps	Winston-Salem, NC	South		16-29	Academic, Leadership, job skills	Team/Corps/ Group	http://www.northwest piedmontworks.org/servicecorps/index.cfm
Oakland Green Jobs Corps	Oakland, CA	West	Low-Income/Working Class Youth		Environmental, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration	Apprenticeship	http://www.ellabakercenter.org/index.php?p=gcjc_green_jobs_corps
Oasis Center	Nashville, TN	South	Urban Youth, At-risk Youth, Homeless Youth	Teens, Up to and through age 21 for homeless youth	Community Organizing, Support Services	Youth/ Community center	http://www.oasiscenter.org/do/leadership

Organization Name	Location	Programmatic Geographic Location	Target Demographic	Demographic Age Range	Type of Activities	Structure	URL
Operation Fresh Start	Madison, WI	Midwest	Out of School Youth (Dropped out of HS), High School Youth	16-24	Environmental, Home-Building	Team/Corps/ Group, Classes	http://www.operationfreshstart.org/
Peace in the Hood	Cleveland, OH	Midwest	At-risk Youth		Dance/Performance, Academic, Mentoring, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration, Financial Literacy, Cultural Specific Diversity Programming	After School, Summer Camp	http://www.peaceinthehood.com/default.asp
Project Hip Hop	Roxbury, MA	New England	Urban Youth, Youth of Color, At-risk Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Leadership, Community Organizing	Youth/ Community center, Classes	http://www.projecthiphop.org/
Reconcile (Cafe)	New Orleans	South	At-risk Youth	16-22	Academic, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration, Culinary	Apprenticeship	http://reconcileneworleans.org/
Roca	Chelsea, MA	New England	Urban Youth, Out of School Youth (Dropped out of HS), High School Youth, Youth in or coming out of Juvenile Court/Justice System, Low-Income/Working Class Youth, Youth of Color, At-risk Youth, Unprepared or Underprepared for College, HS Grads who have not gone to college	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Studio Art, Press/ Media, Dance/ Performance, Sports, Mentoring, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration	Youth/ Community center	http://www.rocainc.org/
San Antonio Youth Centers	San Antonio, TX	Southwest	Urban Youth, Out of School Youth (Dropped out of HS), Low-Income/Working Class Youth, At-risk Youth	High School Age, Dropped out	Leadership, Outdoor education, Youthbuild	After School, Team/Corps/ Group	http://sanantonioyouth.org/
Sasha Bruce Youthwork	Washington, DC	Mid-Atlantic	Urban Youth, High School Youth, At-risk Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Community Organizing, Support Services	Residential	www.sashabruce.org
Single Stop USA	New York, NY	National	Urban Youth, Low-Income/ Working Class Youth, Youth of Color, At-risk Youth	Families	Academic, Mentoring, Leadership, Community Organizing	Selection/ Application Process	http://www.singlestopusa.org/index.shtml
Sociedad Latina	Roxbury, MA	New England	Out of School Youth (Dropped out of HS), Low-Income/ Working Class Youth, At-risk Youth, HS Grads who have not gone to college, Immigrant Youth, Latino Youth	Youth, not defined	Studio Art, Dance/ Performance, Community Organizing, Job Training	Youth/ Community center	http://www.sociedadlatina.org/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx
South Memphis Alliance Citizens Center	Memphis, TN	South	Urban Youth, High School Youth, Youth in or coming out of Juvenile Court/Justice System, At-risk Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18 (14-24)	Mentoring	Youth/ Community center	http://smaweb.org/
Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition	Tennessee	South	Refugee Youth, Immigrant Youth		Community Organizing		http://www.tnimmigrant.org/youth-justice-project/

Organization Name	Location	Programmatic Geographic Location	Target Demographic	Demographic Age Range	Type of Activities	Structure	URL
The CityKids Foundation	New York, NY	Mid-Atlantic	Urban Youth	13-19	Academic, Mentoring, Leadership, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration, Community Service, Communication Skills	After School, Youth/ Community center	http://www.citykids.com/index.php
The Civic-Duty Initiative	Fallsburg, NY	National	Youth in or coming out of Juvenile Court/Justice System	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Leadership, Community Organizing, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration, Community Service	Apprenticeship, Residential, Selection/ Application Process	http://www.thinkoutsidethecell.com/civic-duty-initiative
The Midnight Forum	Washington, D.C.	Mid-Atlantic	Youth of Color, At-risk Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Studio Art, Dance/ Performance, Leadership	Classes	http://www.midnightforum.org/frame.php?src=http://www.midnightforum.org/
The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation	National	National	Urban Youth, Out of School Youth (Dropped out of HS), High School Youth, Youth in or coming out of Juvenile Court/Justice System, Low-Income/Working Class Youth, Youth of Color, At-risk Youth, Unprepared or Underprepared for College, HS Grads who have not gone to college	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Community Organizing		http://ncbcp.org/
The Strategy Center	Los Angeles, CA	West	Youth of Color		Academic, Community Organizing, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration	summer institute	http://www.thestrategycenter.org/campaign/summer-youth-organizing-academy-syoa
Think Outside the Cell	New York, NY	National	Youth in or coming out of Juvenile Court/Justice System	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Mentoring, Leadership, Community Organizing, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration	Apprenticeship, Team/Corps/ Group, Residential, Selection/ Application Process	http://www.thinkoutsidethecell.org/
United Teen Equality Center	Lowell, MA	New England	Urban, high-school dropout youth of diverse ethnic backgrounds	currently 13-23 will be transitioning to 16-20	Civic, academic, vocational, cultural/ arts	Community center	http://www.utec-lowell.org/index.php
Urban Leadership Institute	Baltimore, MD	National	Urban Youth, Youth of Color, At-risk Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Academic, Mentoring, Leadership, Community Organizing, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration, Performing/Visual Arts	Team/Corps/ Group, Classes	http://www.urbanyouth.org/

Organization Name	Location	Programmatic Geographic Location	Target Demographic	Demographic Age Range	Type of Activities	Structure	URL
Urban Youth Alliance International	Bronx, NY	Mid-Atlantic	Urban Youth, Out of School Youth (Dropped out of HS), High School Youth, Youth in or coming out of Juvenile Court/Justice System, Low-Income/Working Class Youth, Youth of Color, At-risk Youth, HS Grads who have not gone to college	High School Age, Teens, Over 18	Leadership, Community Organizing, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration, Community Service	Team/Corps/ Group	http://www.uyai.org/
Urban Youth Empowerment Program	Baltimore, St.Louis, etc	National	Urban Youth, Out of School Youth (Dropped out of HS), Youth of Color, At-risk Youth, HS Grads who have not gone to college	18-21	Academic, Community Organizing, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration, Community Service	Youth/ Community center	http://www.ulstl.org/urban_youth_empowerment_program.aspx
Urban Youth Empowerment Series (U-YES)	Omaha/ Douglas counties, Nebraska	Midwest	Urban Youth, Out of School Youth (Dropped out of HS), High School Youth, HS Grads who have not gone to college	15-21	Academic, Leadership, Community Organizing, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration, Community Service	Classes	http://www.urbanleagueneb.org/education_connection/u_yes/
Urban Youth Program	Detroit, MI	Midwest	Urban Youth, Youth of Color, At-risk Youth	High School Age, Teens, Over 18			http://www.urbanyouthprogram.com/index.html
Wellstone	St. Paul, MN	National	High School Youth, Native American Youth, Youth of Color	Over 18	Leadership, Community Organizing	Classes, Selection/ Application Process	http://www.wellstone.org
Yo! Baltimore	Baltimore, MD	Mid-Atlantic	Out of School Youth (Dropped out of HS), Youth in or coming out of Juvenile Court/Justice System, At-risk Youth, Unprepared or Underprepared for College, HS Grads who have not gone to college	16-22	Studio Art, Academic, Sports, Community Organizing, Job Training/Job Skills/ Career Exploration	Youth/ Community center	http://www.yobaltimore.org/
Youth Program @ the Center	San Francisco, CA	West	LGBTQ Youth	under 24	Studio Art, Leadership, Community Organizing, discussion groups, social services	Youth/ Community center, mainly event-based	http://www.sfcenter.org/programs/youthprograms/youthprogram.php
Youth Speak! Collective	San Fernando Valley, CA	West	Low-Income/Working Class Youth, At-risk youth, High School Youth	High School Youth, Teens, Over 18+	Academic, Mentoring, Community Service, Studio Art, Job Training/Career Exploration, Press/ Media	Internship, Classes, Youth/ Community Center	http://youthspeakcollective.wordpress.com/
YouthLaunch	Austin, TX	Southwest	Urban Youth, Out of School Youth (Dropped out of HS), High School Youth, At-risk Youth, HS Grads who have not gone to college	Teens, High School Age, Over 18	Academic, Mentoring, Leadership, Community Service, Sustainable Agriculture	After School, Youth/ Community center	http://www.youthlaunch.org/about/missionvision.php

Section 5:

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