An Inequitable Invitation to Citizenship:
Non-College-Bound Youth and Civic Engagement
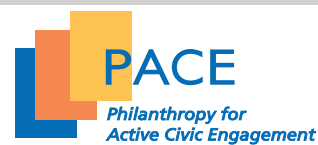
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ABOUT PACE

PACE is a community of grantmakers and donors committed to strengthening democracy by using the power, influence and resources of philanthropy to open pathways to participation. PACE's mission is to work within the field of philanthropy to inspire interest, understanding and investment in civic engagement, broadly defined.

PACE was founded in 2005 with an intent to bring new philanthropic focus to the issues of civic engagement, democratic renewal and citizen activism. Formerly know as the Grantmakers Forum on Community and National Service, PACE was created to take a broad approach to educating grantmakers about effective civic engagement strategies that strengthen communities and improve our democratic practice.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last presidential election, when an immense effort was made to get young people to the polls, only 32 percent of non-college-bound youth voted, compared to 62 percent of college-bound youth. This alarming gap underscores the importance of addressing the issues raised in this new PACE white paper, "An Inequitable Invitation to Citizenship: Non-College-Youth and Civic Engagement". While both the non-profit world and the philanthropic community have spent considerable effort finding innovative ways to bring college students into the world of public life, much less attention has been paid to the challenge of engaging young people who are not college bound.

PACE encourages its members to take the lead in raising questions and issues for us to explore, and bring those issues to the attention of the wider network of funders.

PACE is grateful to The Case Foundation for accepting that invitation and supporting this report. Case has been a long-time member of PACE and Ben Binswanger of Case has been an active and engaged board member. We thank them for their support of this effort, which has been a true partnership from the first stages of the project.

This paper focuses on what the pathways to civic participation look like for noncollege- bound youth (NCBY) – and how they differ from the ones being traveled by youth in college or on their way there. As the authors state, the widening disparity between the participation levels of these two demographic groups bodes ill for our democracy -- and our ability to wrestle with the complex and challenging issues of race, class, education, and opportunity.

In examining the civic participation of NCBY, the authors provide a useful framework for examining the issue. It shows the need for a continuum of supportive strategies running from childhood through the mid-20s. As they suggest, addressing the shifting social, economic, and political landscape for young adults is particularly important to acknowledge when looking to develop effective programs and approaches.

The authors apply a similar holistic approach when addressing the question, "So, what do we do about it?" They provide ideas not only for funders, but for federal and state governments, schools and school systems, higher education, the military, political/advocacy organizations, community institutions, and businesses. In doing so, they make a compelling case that only with the full participation of all of these players will we be able, as a society, to issue an equitable invitation to citizenship to NCBY.

The panoply of recommendations that conclude this paper is evidence of how much there is to do if we are to truly invite the voices and perspectives of NCBY into our civic and political life. At PACE, we feel there is an important role for funders to play not only

with their own individual funding but also in connecting their work to a wider web of public, private and non-profit sector efforts. It is in that spirit of connection and collaboration that we offer this report and invite you to engage with it, share it, and use it as a springboard to build relationships and take action.

John Esterle,
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An Inequitable Invitation to Citizenship:
Non-College-Bound Youth and Civic Engagement

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in engaging young people in the civic and political processes of American life. That interest emerged from a proliferation of studies released in the late 1990s and early 2000s documenting a palpable slippage in youth voting rates, civic knowledge, and interest in politics. At the same time, young people had become more attracted to volunteering and community service.

In response, foundations, corporations, and individual donors invested millions of dollars in a panoply of projects, initiatives, and funding streams designed to help engage young people—and engage them more deeply—in civic and political processes and institutions that are the hallmark of U.S. democracy. Hundreds of new organizations have been established and others expanded. Thousands of staff positions have been created. Scores of Internet sites have been designed. And what was once a fledgling infrastructure to support this work has now grown into a bona fide field comprising professional networks, research centers, educational resources, and public financing streams.

Some believe that these kinds of investments contributed to recent upticks in youth civic engagement. As proof, they point to the 2008 elections. During the primary season, youth turnout tripled and quadrupled in districts with the most competitive nominating races (Marcelo, K.B., & Kirby, E.H., 2008). Compared to 2004, youth turnout during the 2008 presidential election rose by four to five percentage points to 52 percent—the third straight turnout increase in a presidential election since 1996, when youth turnout was 37 percent (CIRCLE, 2008). Evidence also indicates that young people continue to volunteer at higher rates than older adults (Kawashima-Ginsberg, Marcelo & Kirby, 2009).

Others, however, believe that these data should be viewed with caution, especially in interpreting them to signify a movement. Spikes in voting might be temporary. They might also reflect only that portion of the youth population already prone to vote; that the candidates in this particular election were those who promoted a different kind of politics than the kind young people had previously eschewed; and/or that they were attracted by an array of new technologies the candidates used to great effect. In short, the uptick in voting is not a guarantee that young people will stay involved in politics, particularly in difficult times (Gans, 2008).

Increases in civic engagement are driven disproportionately by young people from higher income families and communities… Low income and non-college-bound youth are lagging far behind in their levels of civic participation – a gap that threatens the heath of democracy.

This debate is important and should continue, but it ignores an ever-present yet rarely acknowledged reality: Increases in voting, volunteering, and other forms of civic engagement are driven disproportionately by young people from higher-income families and communities, as well as youth who are college-bound or already enrolled in secondary institutions. In contrast, low-income and non-college-bound youth are lagging far behind in their levels of civic participation—a gap that threatens the health of a democracy that depends on the full participation of everyone, not just some.

> *Although just 57 percent of U.S. citizens under 30 have ever attended college, 70 percent of all young voters in the 2008 election had gone to college (CIRCLE, 2008).*

Ample data underscore the stark differences in the civic and political engagement of college-bound and non-college-bound (NCBY) youth:

• Nearly 60 percent of 18-24 year-old college students voted in the 2004 presidential election, while only one-third of non-college attending youth (ages 18-24) voted (Lopez, et. al., 2005). That disparity also emerged during the 2008 primaries, with college students nearly four times more likely to have voted than students not attending college (25 percent vs. 7 percent) (CIRCLE, 2008).

• The gap between college-educated and non-college-bound youth (NCBY) continued during the 2008 presidential election. Although just 57 percent of U.S. citizens under 30 have ever attended college, 70 percent of all young voters in the 2008 election had gone to college (CIRCLE, 2008).

• The same disproportion emerged in young people without a high school diploma. Although the latter make up 14 percent of the general population, only 6 percent of young voters in the 2008 presidential election had no high school diploma (CIRCLE, 2008).

• According to the Current Population Survey, 8.3 percent of 19-25 year-old NCBY volunteered in 2006, down from 10.6 percent the previous year. In contrast, in 2006, nearly one in three college students (31 percent) volunteered (Marcelo, et.al., 2007). Similar education-related disparities were reported for all adults, 16 years old and older (Foster-Bey, 2008).

• A recent survey found that college-bound youth had higher rates of civic involvement across 16 of 19 indicators of civic participation, including voting, volunteering, canvassing, boycotting, and "buycotting" (Lopez, et. al., 2005).

• Traditional measures of civic engagement for non-college youth have declined substantially since the 1970s, when unions, churches and other religious congregations, social movements, and voluntary associations provided more opportunities for NCBY to attend meetings, work on community projects, belong to groups, and meet political officials (National Conference on Citizenship, 2006). Whether musical culture or new forms of association that use the Internet can compensate is still a question.

Some might assume that low-income and non-college-bound youth[1] are not as interested in becoming active citizens, and "blame" them for that disinterest. Research, however, suggests otherwise by indicating that the fault lies with an imbalanced distribution of educational, political, and/or civic resources and opportunities.

Non-College-Bound Youth: A Definition

Non-College-Bound Youth (NCBY) are Americans between the ages of 15 and 29 who have never attended college and are not currently on a course to do so. Although most students who graduate from high school go on to college, as many as one in four adolescents do not complete high school (Heckman & LaFontaine, 2007). As a result, NCBY represent about 50 percent of the whole youth population. (Kiesa & Marcelo, 2009).

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[1] Considering the extremely strong correlation between income and educational attainment, this paper assumes that non-college-bound youth are less likely to come from economically advantaged families. It is not assumed, however, that all youth from less economically advantaged families are non-college-bound. This distinction is particularly important when considering strategies to engage NCBY, i.e. they are not necessarily the same as initiatives that are focused directly to target low-income communities.

Today, 40 percent of the entire youth population under the age of 18 come from low-income backgrounds[2] and are under-exposed (or in some cases, have no exposure whatsoever) to high-quality civic education. They also lack opportunities to assume leadership roles in their schools and communities and to participate in civic activities, school-led or otherwise (Hart & Kirshner, 2009; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; McFarland & Starrmans, 2007).

Low-income youth or youth whose parents never attended college also are less likely to attend post-secondary institutions where much attention to youth civic engagement occurs. The average educational attainment of those growing up in poverty, for example, is less than a high school diploma (Duncan, et. al., 2008), and approximately 40 to 50 percent of students from low-income families drop out before graduation (Kauffman, et. al., 2004).

This is a particularly severe problem in high-poverty school districts (Neild & Balfanz, 2006). Conservative estimates show that nearly half of young people from low-income families do not attend college (Horn & Nunez, 2000), though the rate is most likely lower in urban centers.

With fewer stimulating civics classes, quality extracurricular programs, and civic associations to join, NCBY youth live in a civic-impoverished environment that is not of their own making

The result: NCBY have been issued an inequitable invitation to citizenship. While they are expected to become enthusiastic citizens, they are given few opportunities to experience themselves as contributing participants in civic and political life.

This gap should concern all those who care about and are committed to building a healthier and more robust democracy that involves all citizens. Closing it will not be easy because it will require more than short-term, easy solutions or public denunciations of young people's "lack of participation."

Instead, it will require more thoughtful strategies based on solid research illuminating the probable causes of and remedies for this inequitable invitation to citizenship. Solutions will also require the investment of thousands of community leaders, educators, funders, nonprofit groups, government agencies, and others with an interest in maintaining and improving our democratic tradition.

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[2] *Accessed from American Factfinder (http://factfinder.census.gov/) on May 1, 2009.*

Why Should We Care About Non-College-Bound Youth (NCBY)?

Alexis de Tocqueville, who in the early 19th century traveled across the country documenting how U.S. democracy was practiced in communities, would see a different America today from the one he observed almost 175 years ago. In his book Democracy in America—one of the first works of sociology and political science that has since become a standard text on American civic life—de Tocqueville saw widespread participation in voluntary associations devoted to enhancing and promoting education, commerce, and local civic life.

If de Tocqueville were alive today, however, he would most likely observe a "new America"—one that is divided in terms of people's opportunities to learn about, practice, and become skilled at democratic citizenship.

Of particular interest to him was the broad spectrum of participants involved in these associations—people from all walks of life with a wide range of experiences and backgrounds. That depth and breadth of participation led de Tocqueville to conclude that "the social condition of the Americans is eminently democratic" (de Tocqueville, 1831, Chapter 3).

If de Tocqueville were alive today, however, he would most likely observe a "new America"—one that is divided in terms of people's opportunities to learn about, practice, and become skilled at democratic citizenship. Specifically, low-income people have fewer civic opportunities, and high-income people have more, and more meaningful, chances to participate. .

There are numerous explanations for this split, many of which overlap. For one, low-income families tend to be less educated and live in districts that are relatively unresponsive to constituents and where political talk has been stilled to a near whisper. Redistricting has resulted in diminished political competition that, in turn, can dampen debate and interest at the local level.

In addition, local public schools are tightly focused on conveying "basic skills" and are unable or unwilling to promote citizenship as an educational goal through civics classes, community-service programs, student government, or discussions of controversial issues. After-school programs are more open to providing service or political experiences, but there is still no national curriculum for these programs, which vary widely by sponsorship and by site.

Low-income neighborhoods also tend to have fewer adult mentors and role models for the kind of political activity that might stimulate community-wide interest, especially among young people. And neighborhoods differ in their civic richness, i.e., having functioning civic organizations that spell out the democratic process and touch the lives of youth effectively. Perhaps most importantly, low-income youth are less likely to be interested in or equipped for attending, much less attend, college where much political and civic socialization increasingly occurs.

Addressing clear differences in the level to which NCBY are engaged in civic and political life is important for several reasons:

A truly representative democracy hinges on the participation of all citizens—not just a select few. If the voices of NCBY are not well represented, their needs are unlikely to be met, and their potential contributions to society may never be realized. This presents a problem of circularity: When NCBY perceive that their needs are not being met by elected officials, their incentive for involvement—including citizen-driven collective action that advocates for changes—may diminish (Bartels, 2008; Warren, 2001; Levine, 2007).

Non-participation can deepen the cycle of civic exclusion. Considerable data indicate that when parents don't vote, their children are much less likely to vote (Plutzer, 2002), resulting in a cycle of voter apa-

thy unless intentional efforts are made to bring young people bring into the booth. If NCBY do not become civically involved now, there is a high likelihood that their children will not be involved later.

Youth is a critical period for civic and political socialization. Although the ages of 16 to 24 are not the only time period during which political and civic identities are shaped, they are a particularly fertile window in which lifelong civic habits are formed (Mannheim, 1952; Flanagan & Faison, 2001). If this developmentally opportune moment is missed, it is highly likely that compensatory steps will need to be taken to ensure the same results.

Civic engagement opportunities contribute to youth development overall. Much research indicates that young people will not achieve their full potential as adult citizens if they are not given the support and opportunities needed to encourage their civic and political participation during childhood and adolescence. This is particularly true with NCBY who live in disadvantaged environments that are often unable to provide or support firsthand experiences in public discussion of community issues, meeting with public officials, participation in student government, or having one's views sought out by municipal officials.

History shows that, when opportunities arise, disadvantaged groups have become highly engaged citizens. Much documentation exists about how groups that had once been viewed as "disinterested in" and even "incapable of" civic participation became active, engaged citizens who eventually changed history. Late-nineteenth century impoverished youth who emigrated from Poland or Italy, for example, were judged by some to have come from intellectually and morally "deficient" stock—the same individuals who, in just a few decades, were enrolled in college and employed in white-collar positions.

Most scholars believe the source of this transformation to be less a set of inherent individualistic characteristics than the welcoming and supportive environments of a set of key civic, nonprofit, and political institutions—schools, churches, immigrant associations, community groups, and others—focused on

encouraging a wide variety of civic behaviors and actions (Putnam, 2000).

In the United States, for example, African-American youth have lower average levels of income and education than their white counterparts; yet, they surpass whites on most measures of civic engagement, due, at least in some part, to traditions, norms, and institutions that promote participation in the Black community (Lopez, et.al., 2005; Levine 2007).

Opportunities to participate in civic and political life might have positive effects in other areas. Recent studies indicate that young people who have the opportunity to participate in high-quality, longer-term school-based service-learning programs (classroom-based learning coupled with experiential experiences in communities or institutions) may have higher rates of academic achievement and youth leadership. These opportunities also enhance young people's critical thinking and social skill-building abilities (Billig, et. al., 2005).

A Developmental Framework for Civic Participation

There are several theoretical frameworks for examining youth civic engagement, but in recent years, the most prevalent has been the political socialization model. The latter stresses the importance of familial and school-based influences on future engagement, especially political participation, which is often measured in terms of voting rates.

Developmental theorists believe that sustained civic participation—or "civic identity"—is a process that evolves throughout childhood and into adulthood. Civic identity is developed through multiple experiences during childhood and adolescence that predispose young people to take advantage of opportunities as they emerge throughout their lives.

A growing number of civic engagement scholars and practitioners who are interested in NCBY, however, have moved toward embracing a developmental model—one they believe to be more holistic and explanatory regarding the civic participation of this population (as well as of youth overall). What makes the developmental model particularly appropriate for NCBY is that it:

• *Assumes that civic skills and behaviors are acquired over time.* Developmental theorists believe that sustained civic participation—or "civic identity"—is a process that evolves throughout childhood and into adulthood. Civic identity does not suddenly emerge at age 18 with voting eligibility or with an AmeriCorps experience after college. Rather, civic identity is developed through multiple experiences during childhood and adolescence that predispose young people to take advantage of opportunities as they emerge throughout their lives.

• *Addresses a wide and diverse array of proximal factors that influence young people's civic development* such as families, communities, faith traditions, peer groups, the media, schools, out-of-school activities, public events, and others—rather than from one school, course, or family.

• *Views all young people as capable of becoming civically engaged* but understands that this potential must be sparked by adequate resources and opportunities. In short, when the proper conditions are in place, the developmental processes will kick in.

• *Recognizes the importance of societal and community-level factors in influencing civic development.* Poverty, social disorganization, isolation, and lack of access to political systems can be as influential in influencing civic engagement as familial or school-related factors. Communities with a civic infrastructure that includes nonprofits, faith-based institutions, and voluntary groups are more likely to promote sustained and active participation, while communities without these elements may hinder it.

• *Believes that interventions, programs, and/or events intended to increase youth civic engagement should be implemented long before young people reach college* and even prior to high school—a conclusion that education reformers also have reached.[3] While civic development can and does occur during adulthood to remediate civic deficits in childhood and adolescence, starting earlier leads to longer-term and more substantial results later.

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[3] *This is based on the exponential increase in funding for early childhood education and pre-K initiatives over the past decade, as well as the strong focus of No Child Left Behind on elementary schools.*

A developmental perspective stipulates two general phases in young people's civic development:

1) Childhood and adolescence (0 to18 years of age)[4]. During this period, young people become civically socialized through a variety of venues such as families, peers, schools, faith-based institutions, and other community organizations. These experiences can be enhanced by additional civic opportunities such as service-learning programs, student governments, and student organizing that, when available to young people, can enhance their civic knowledge and skills.

2) Emerging adulthood (16 to 25 years of age)[5]. During this period, young people's civic knowledge and skills continue to develop primarily through socializing with friends or colleagues, work and military experiences, membership in civic/faith-based organizations, and marriage/family life.

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[4] *This categorization does not imply that childhood comprises one development period; in fact, most developmental scholars believe that it comprises several. Rather, it is put forward as one category for the purposes of this paper.*

[5] *We recognize that the lower end of the emerging adulthood years overlaps with the later ages of the youth years, which illustrates the multiple developmental transitions that occur during this time period.*

Childhood and Adolescence (ages 0-18):
Factors That Influence Civic Participation Among NCBY

Several factors influence the extent to which young people, especially adolescents, become interested and engaged in civic and political activities. When one or more of these factors is absent—as is often the case with NCBY—they can lead to dramatically decreased levels of civic and political participation.

Research indicates the most prominent individual-level factors that predict whether young people are civically engaged are motivation, empathy, and altruism.

Individual characteristics. Research indicates the most prominent individual-level factors that predict whether young people are civically engaged are motivation, empathy, and altruism. Civic knowledge is also another important factor for engagement, especially when it works in concert with motivation (for a review, see Zaff & Michelsen, 2001).

While civic knowledge among young people overall continues to sag, it is particularly low among young people who are less likely to go to college. The National Assessment of Educational Progress civics test, which is periodically administered to 8th and 12th grade students in the U.S., found that students whose parents had, at most, a high school diploma, scored 30 points or more below students whose parents achieved higher levels of education. Only 10 percent of students with parents with high school degrees or less were assessed as being proficient (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007).

Family. Family is important in the cultivation of civic behaviors and civic identity, whether through transmission of cultural norms or modeling of behaviors and attitudes (Dunham & Bengston, 1992; Flanagan & Faison, 2001; Fletcher, et. al., 2000; Zaff, et. al., 2008).

Data consistently show that adults with lower educational attainment have lower rates of voting and volunteering, suggesting that young people in those families may not be receiving adequate civic socialization within their family system. Lower numbers of NCBY also report having fewer political discussions with parents, which is a strong predictor of civic knowledge (McIntosh et. al., 2007).

Schools. Schools are obvious vehicles for conveying civic knowledge and stoking political interest and have, in many cases, helped to compensate for parents' lack of familiarity with the political system, e.g., students of parents who have emigrated from non-democratic settings.

A recent study of California public high schools reported a direct correlation between the number and quality of civics classes and the socioeconomic status of students these schools served, with higher levels of poverty having fewer civics classes (Kahne & Middaugh,

Research, though, shows that students in high schools where the majority of young people are not headed for college are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to having access to civic education which, in an environment of scarce resources, is often viewed as less important than core subjects such as math and reading. A recent study of California public high schools, for example, reported a direct correlation between the number and quality of civics classes and the socioeconomic status of students these schools served, with higher levels of poverty having fewer civics classes (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008).

Teachers are also often reluctant to embrace civic education because they see it as "yet another add-on" to an already packed curriculum focused on science, math, and reading. Standards and testing regulations only add to that pressure to "teach to the test."

Teachers interested in civic education are often left to their own devices when trying to incorporate it into their classrooms, and there are few opportunities for these educators to obtain substantive training and support. When there are civics classes, these classes are less likely to involve democratic procedures such as teachers encouraging civil discussion of serious issues (Niemi & Junn, 1998).

It is not just civics classes that are frequently missing in high schools serving NCBY but an array of enriching supplements that can facilitate learning and make civic-related content interesting to young people (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Among these are opportunities to discuss controversial issues, community service projects, participation in simulated political processes, use of technology, among others (Levine & Gibson, 2003).

High schools serving NCBY also are less likely than high schools serving college-bound youth to have student governments, participation in which has been shown to increase the likelihood of civic engagement later in life (Hanks & Eckland, 1978; Verba, et. al., 1995). Students in NCBY-predominant schools are also less likely (or be asked) to participate in helping to create school policy or rules. Students, for example, may be permitted to raise funds for the senior prom, but they are unlikely to partake in decisions regarding disciplinary issues that may emerge during that event (McFarland & Starrmans, 2007).

An analysis of New York City high schools underscores the sharp divisions between institutions serving NCBY and those serving college-bound youth (Devine, 1996).[6] In NCBY schools, classroom-based academic learning is formally segregated from the civic life occurring in public spaces inside and outside the school building.

While classroom instruction is managed by administration and teachers, the rest of the school environment is usually under the control of a non-teaching security force that monitors students' behavior and enforces disciplinary codes. Students tend to have

little, if any, say regarding the disciplinary codes and frequently find themselves at odds with a set of rules they perceive as arbitrary, impersonal, and unrelated to "real life."

This split between teaching functions and discipline offers young people few, if any, opportunities to integrate civic practice and learning into everyday social behavior. It also results in a woefully deficient civic atmosphere (Devine, 1996; Fine, 1994).

Thus, when the connection is made between practice and learning, it is hardly surprising that NCBY perform well. When NCBY are given opportunities to participate in school reform, they are able to focus on a host of issues that would improve the educational context; for instance fair application of the disciplinary code, effectively dealing with sexual harassment, and limiting the use of high stakes tests which often penalize these students (Larson & Hansen, 2005; Sherman, 2002).

When service is connected conceptually to civics instruction—what many call service-learning—it can lead to long-term involvement in volunteering and voting

Community Service and After-School Activities. Service to one's community has been shown to be a helpful and knowledge-enhancing adjunct to classroom-based civic learning. Young people are able to address "real life" problems such as homelessness, the environment, and poverty while learning social responsibility.

Since the early 1990s, an increasing number of high schools either have mandated community service as part of their curricula or encouraged students to participate in it (Spring, et. al., 2008),[7] based on the rationale that service encourages social responsibility and citizenship (Niemi & Chapman, 1998).

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[6] *The distinction between NCBY and CBY institutions was made by calculating the proportion of students who score highly on achievement scores and go on to college.*

[7] *During 2008, 86 percent of high schools reported recognizing the civic activities of the student body, compared to 83 percent in 1999. During 2008, 72 percent of high schools reported arranging civic activities for students—basically unchanged from 1999 (71 percent).*

Data, in fact, substantiate this rationale, indicating that when service is connected conceptually to civics instruction—what many call service-learning—it can lead to long-term involvement in volunteering and voting (Hanks & Eckland, 1978; Beane, et al., 1981; Hart & Kirshner, 2009; Youniss & Yates, 1999). By providing students with opportunities to address community problems or issues, lead those initiatives, and reflect on their experiences, young people are able to build social and civic competencies that equip them for life-long civic participation.

Among high schools enrolling mainly NCBY, however, there are fewer sponsored service-learning programs, which limits schools' abilities to enhance civic curricula in the short-term and civic participation among NCBY in the long-term (Kahne & Middleburg, 2008). A recent analysis of Current Population Survey data shows a seven point disparity in service-learning opportunities between high- and low-poverty schools (27 versus 20 percent, respectively), and large disparities in schools that recognize students' civic actions (72 percent for low-poverty versus 62 percent for high-poverty) and arrange civic activities for students (61 percent for low poverty and 54 percent for high poverty) (Spring, et. al., 2008).

When NCBY do have opportunities to participate in community service, these tend to be mediated by local churches, rather than by a wide set of community-based nonprofit organizations that typically attract more college-bound youth and are also able to offer a wider-ranging and more diverse set of service experiences. This means that NCBY have less of a "buffet" from which to choose how and where they will do their service and tend to have lower rates of participation in such opportunities (Harvard Family Research Project, 2007).

Some after-school programs, especially those that focus on at-risk youth, have been able to combine academic and social enrichment with recreation and opportunities for community service.

There are some bright spots in this picture. Some after-school programs, especially those that focus on at-risk youth, have been able to combine academic and social enrichment with recreation and opportunities for com-

munity service (Allen et al., 1997; Philiber et al., 2002). Quantum Opportunities, Teen Outreach Project, and Across Ages are examples of programs that have had at least a modest impact on current community service, as well as on academic and social outcomes that lead to more positive years of adolescence (Allen, et al. 1997; Hahn, 1994; Losciuto et al., 1996).

These programs suggest that a well-designed extension of schooling into the community can increase achievement (see meta-analysis by Durlak & Weissberg, 2006 for additional program examples). A host of other service-based programs targeting NCBY show that they have a significant, though modest, impact on academic, behavioral, and labor market outcomes, but either do not show any impact on civic participation or were not evaluated to test for that outcome (see Michelson, Zaff, & Hair, 2002 for a review).

Youth organizing has been another way to create a bridge between school and community and encourage civic participation.

Youth organizing has been another way to create a bridge between school and community and encourage civic participation. Two recent publications provide insight into the practices that can help lead to greater civic skills among NCBY (Checkoway & Guitierrez, 2006; Kirshner, 2007). When youth participate in programs that encourage them to take action in addressing problems of immediate interest to their lives (e.g., promoting neighborhood safety, school reform, etc.), they feel connected to the work and show capabilities for collaboration with their peers.

Both of these, in turn, contribute to effective collective action among groups of young people. Additionally, youth demonstrate competence in establishing relationships with officials such as school administrators, police, or legislators (Ginwright, 2007; Larson & Hansen, 2005; Hart & Kirshner, 2009).

Whether these outcomes can be sustained into adulthood, however, is still unclear. Students who participate in these kinds of studies are generally not tracked beyond high school, and the causal connections between specific program inputs and civic outcomes have not always been stipulated.

Moreover, although these programs are directed toward NCBY, they still tend to reach only a relatively small number of this population.

According to the Harvard Family Research Project (2007), youth from higher income families are still significantly more likely to participate in virtually all out-of-school programs and activities—sports, clubs, arts, etc.—than youth from lower income families, with the exception of the latter receiving more tutoring as part of compensatory education.

Neighborhood and System-Level Factors. "Place"—and the conditions place provides for civic development—has been relatively overlooked as an important factor contributing to civic socialization. Neighborhood wealth or poverty, the quality of municipal governance and services, and whether systems are functional or dysfunctional can and do encourage or impede civic engagement.

A study of the Baltimore-Washington region across several Congressional districts, for example, revealed surprising differences in young people's political knowledge and involvement in politics (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2003). Districts were compared according to the degree of competition in recent elections, which has been shown to be directly associated with socioeconomic status.

Areas with a preponderance of less wealthy and less educated citizens tended to have fewer contested elections, i.e., many districts have long-serving, unchallenged elected officials and are more prone to gerrymandering that ensures re-election of incumbents. Less electoral competition was associated with less knowledge about and involvement in politics. Young people living in less competitive districts also had less interest in discussing political issues with family members, teachers, and peers.

Another factor associated with NCBY and lower SES is an unfavorable distribution of adults relative to children. In areas highly saturated with children, political knowledge among youth tends to suffer, compared to areas with higher proportions of adults (Hart & Kirshner, 2009). While one reason may be the lack of attention schools in low-income neighborhoods tend to pay to civic education, another is that the relative absence of adults, especially politically knowledgeable adults, diminishes opportunities for discussion of issues and political processes, including elections and campaigns (McIntosh, et al, 2007).

In civic-deficient environments such as those prevalent in low-income areas, government and governmental institutions are often seen as uninviting and fraught with tension. Elected officials may feel safe enough in incumbency so as not to invite citizen participation. City workers representing the municipal government tend to act bureaucratically or impersonally, rather then respectfully, to community residents, whether the focus is motor vehicle registration or garbage collection. Police treatment of community residents—perceived or actual—can also influence whether and how people participate in civic life (Gimpel & Pearson-Merkowitz, 2009; Bourgoise, 1995; Hagedorn, 1998).

On the other hand, supportive environments for civic engagement can be created even in hard-hit communities. Markus (2002) finds that the West Side of Chicago has extraordinarily high levels of membership and political engagement, even though only one-third of residents had progressed beyond high school and incomes were low. This might be, at least in part, the result of an extensive grassroots infrastructure for supporting civic participation that has been intentionally developed by community leaders since the late 1800s (Levine 2007).

Summary

Review of the evidence about the lives of NCBY during their childhood and adolescent years produces a consistent picture of an impoverished civic context that stultifies civic and political socialization. Non-voting and less knowledgeable parents limit the family's capability of instilling civic interest or skills. Schools, which tend to lack civics classes and offer few opportunities for practicing democracy, are not optimal environments for the acquisition of civic knowledge or democratic practices. After-school and constructive extracurricular activities that could compensate for the lack of civic exposure are severely restricted, if available at all. And the lack of organizations that could be training grounds for youth only adds to the paucity of civic life in youth's surrounding neighborhoods.

Emerging Adulthood:
Factors that Influence Civic Participation in NCBY

The period from age 16 through the mid-20s is recognized as important in civic development because it is a time when earlier experiences and current events coalesce to help form lasting civic identities. Traditionally, development during this period has been viewed through the lens of a series of relatively predictable series of events: Young people complete schooling (whether secondary or continuing to post-secondary), take a career-initiating job, leave their parents' home, get married, and bear children.

Sociologists and political scientists have viewed these events as seminal in the civic development process, with each event embedding young people into their surrounding civic context. Joining the workforce, for example, links young people to economic interests, be it the sector of work in which they are employed or economic level they have entered. Marrying and becoming parents provides an entry for young people into a community as they take up residence, interact with neighbors, send children to local schools, and become aware of local issues which affect their well-being.

In the United States, this pattern had held steady for more than a century and a half with only the exact timing of each event having been altered (Modell, 1989). However, during the past three decades—a time in which these tightly-scripted life events have become more fluid and, in some cases, disappeared altogether—the "life cycle" model that was popular in the past is no longer as relevant, particularly among NCBY. Today, new terms have emerged to capture this phenomenon such as "emerging adulthood" (Arnett, 2005; Setterston, et. al., 2005).

As emerging adults, NCBY face more challenges than their college-bound peers, not only in their everyday lives but also in opportunities for civic participation. Many continue to live in neighborhoods with weak

As emerging adults, NCBY face more challenges than their college-bound peers, not only in their everyday lives but also in opportunities for civic participation.

civic infrastructures. Most employment available to them is part-time with little or no prospect of having health or other benefits—a stark contrast to jobs available to former generations, especially those with strong unions that historically served as social and civic centers for blue collar workers and new immigrants.

A lower level of job and financial security impedes buying a first home and, therefore, developing strong attachments to a broader community. And there are few, if any, ready-made programs or initiatives such as those college-bound youth have available to them on their college campuses to "get involved" in civic or political affairs.

In short, what was the standard series of life events for emerging adults has dissembled into diverse patterns, with particular implications for NCBY. First, the events that had traditionally been important in connecting emerging adults to their families, communities, fellow workers, and country are no longer reliable in helping to fuel civic participation. Second, the lack of strong civic associations and infrastructure in communities where NCBY grow up and live as emerging adults suggests that there will be little incentive or interest in participating over the long-term.

Work and Income

The shift of the labor market—from middle to lower incomes, from career track to career dead-ends, from full benefits to few or no benefits, and from union to non-union jobs—has had profound effects on whether and to what extent NCBY are able to connect to civic institutions.

Today, many NCBY have to take multiple jobs just to meet basic needs, making civic participation an implausible luxury (Gauthier & Furstenburg, 2005). Lack of a college degree carries a larger income penalty today than in the recent past. During the past three decades, the average hourly wage of high school dropouts declined by 16 percent.

Also, the income disparity between high school and college graduates grew from 1.5:1 to 2:1 (Heckman & Krueger, 2004). And, high school graduates' incomes have been hit harder than college graduates by periodic recessions (Hacker, 2007). As a result, many NCBY become part of the "working poor" whose top priorities are putting food on the table and a roof over their heads, rather than participating in community and national issues.[8]

The economic picture for communities of color is even more dire, with nearly 25 percent of African-American and Hispanic 18-to-24-year-olds living in poverty. This income disparities present even more daunting barriers to civic participation among African-American and Hispanic NCBY.

The national decline in union membership has been especially debilitating to NCBY's opportunities for civic engagement. Historically, unions have done more than guarantee living wages and benefits; they have created common bonds among members that often led to shared political goals and activities (Verba, et al., 1995). The demise of unions in traditional employment sectors and their nonexistence in other parts of the labor force has diminished these kinds of opportunities for employees to connect with one another, as well as with their employers, and thus, make them less likely to feel a sense of civic belonging.

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[8] *See examples in South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan of an emerging middle class being related to emerging democratic ideals and greater political activism by their citizens (Martin & Jones, 2007).).*

Military

NCBY enlist in the military in far greater numbers than their college-bound peers. Today, more than 90 percent of recruits across branches are NCBY (Kane, 2006).

Since its inception in 1973, the all-voluntary military has been attractive to NCBY for several reasons. It offers useful employment in contrast to working on and off in a series of dead-end jobs. It provides job training in mechanical, electronic, culinary, and other fields that can help lead to more lucrative employment (Bachmann, Freedman-Doan & O'Malley, 2001). And it offers opportunities for enlistees to earn GEDs and college stipends.

> *The military might be a particularly promising milieu in which to encourage civic engagement among NCBY.*

The military also might be a particularly promising milieu in which to encourage civic engagement among NCBY. Civic lessons, for example, are part of the Initial Entry Training required of every enlistee and, thus, have the potential to be compensatory for NCBY who either dropped out of high school or attended schools with no civics classes (e.g., Kahne & Middaugh, 2008).

The effects of this training have not yet been proven definitively, but some studies suggest that they may be effective in enhancing civic participation. Enlistees also are provided with an introduction to what Boyte (2005) and others call "civic work"—work that requires action in service to one's community and country.

These and other opportunities can help lead to the likelihood of more civic engagement after active service. Moskos and Butler (1996), for example, report that African-American veterans have higher rates of marriage, employment, and income—the very factors that enhance civic attachment—than non-veterans. Teigen (2006) has found consistently higher rates of voting by veterans compared to non-veterans.

History also suggests that military service can enhance civic engagement among enlistees. After World War II,

for example, veterans were the core of what Tom Brokaw (2004) deemed the "greatest generation"— those who returned from military service to lead an economic and civic revival during the 1950s that left a deep mark on the nation's history. In a more scientific analysis of these veterans, Robert Putnam (2000) identified them as the nucleus of what he called the "long civic generation" characterized by their commitment to building a strong civil society of voluntary associations and engaging in political activism that included high voting rates.

Some, however, argue that, despite the military's ability to offer NCBY opportunities they might not otherwise have, its transformation from an institution in which everyone was potentially required to serve (through the draft) to one that is voluntary has chipped away at an ethos that encouraged national unity in times of conflict.

During World War II (and previous wars), for example, the country banded together behind a common purpose, i.e., "we're all in this together." Today, there are palpable divisions between those who serve and those who do not (usually well educated and higher income citizens), particularly in relation to the latter's awareness and/or understanding of the day-to-day realities of war and, in some cases, the reasons in which the United States is engaged in conflict.

Integration into Community Life:
Homeownership and Organizational Affiliations

Establishing permanent residency often leads to caring about and being involved in community-related issues (such as the quality of local schools and safety) (Dispasquale & Galeser, 1998). While some residential mobility is expected during emerging adulthood, significant disparities exist between NCBY and college-bound youth regarding homeownership, and these disparities continue to grow (Gyourko & Linneman, 1997).

Communities of color, in particular, have substantially lower rates of homeownership than white households. Only 26 percent of African-American and 36 percent of Hispanic 25 to 34-year-olds own their homes, compared to 53 percent of whites in the same age group.

One of the central concerns about recent generations of emerging adults, especially NCBY, is their aversion to membership in traditional value-bearing institutions such as churches, affinity groups, social movements, and the like that play important roles in inculcating civic engagement (Settersten & Furstenburg, 2005).

Churches, in particular, have experienced membership declines among young adults who shy away from denominational "truths" they find exclusionary and, instead, gravitate toward what they believe are more inclusionary spiritual practices and beliefs (Arnett, 2005; Roof, 1993; Smith, 2007). Young adults, especially those who are NCBY, also are less likely to attend religious services on a regular basis,[9] further weakening their ties with these kinds of community institutions.

Technology and New Media

Some believe that focusing on declining participation in traditional institutions fails to account for new civic venues to which young adults are gravitating, most notably, Internet-based forms of social life. Today, emerging adults are using cell phones, websites, Facebook/MySpace, and other media tools to connect with peers and the world around them.

These forms of interaction are, in turn, driving changes in the way people communicate, stay connected, and obtain information. A "digital divide," however, still exists. Only 24 percent of those with less than a high school diploma and 49.5 percent of those with a high school diploma have access to any form of the Internet at home (Current Population Survey, 2007). These groups also are less likely to have broadband access—40 and 28 percent respectively (Horrigan, 2008). And while some reports conclude that Internet access at schools is helping to close this gap among primary and secondary school students (DeBell & Chapman, 2003), there is still no indication that non-school time with computers and the Internet will be focused on academic or civic-related activities.

For those who do have Internet access, there are increasing venues through which to engage in civic or political efforts—e.g., Causes on Facebook, Change. org, Razoo, and political blogs, as well as cell phones and texting. Young people, for example, used online social networks and tools to "engage in one of the most contentious techno-political issues today, with more than 17,000 of them signing up as 'friends of network neutrality on MySpace'" (Rheingold, 2007; Montgomery, 2007). The thousands of young people who left their offices and schools in early 2006 to participate in immigration marches were fueled less by formal organizations and more by the buzz created among peers using cell phones, text messaging, and blogs (Gibson, 2006).

This penchant for media production, some argue, can and should be used to generate more political and civic involvement, but it will require the cooperation of traditional institutions such as schools to facilitate this process since the latter are where the majority of young people learn about democracy.

Moreover, young people's participation through technology is highly interactive, with more than 50 percent of today's teenagers creating their own digital media through blogs, wikis, RSS, tagging, mashups, podcasts, videoblogs, and virtual communities (Rheingold, 2007; Lenhart & Madden, 2006). This penchant for media production, some argue, can and should be used to generate more political and civic involvement, but it will require the cooperation of traditional institutions such as schools to facilitate this process since that is where the majority of young people learn about democracy and other political processes.

Given that NCBY are less likely to have access to new technologies in schools—especially those that allow for self-expression—and/or curricula and programs that encourage the use of these technologies, there are serious questions about whether and to what extent NCBY will be able to engage as fully as they might through the relatively low-cost and accessible venues these tools provide (Rheingold, 2007).

Others maintain that the jury is still out about whether these new media have enhanced (or have the potential to replace) traditional avenues of engagement for young people in general, or whether they will continue to be used primarily for socializing with friends and others (Fine, 2008). There are also questions as to whether these social media will attract only the "usual suspects," i.e., young adults who are already predisposed to political engagement (Stolle & Hooghe, 2005; Levine, 2007) and who are more likely to be college-bound youth.

Facebook, for example, mainly allows users to connect with "friends" by searching through academic institutions and employers. It does not provide demographics for those who are not in high school and not in college (and are not college graduates).[10] MySpace, on the other hand, attracts users whose profiles are more aligned with NCBY.[11]

Finally, it is still unclear as to what impact cell phone use will have on people's likelihood of being politically or civically engaged. On **the one hand, it** might be an unprecedented and efficient way to become more involved in politics or civic life, particularly for NCBY who are likely to have cell phones but not more sophisticated media tools. On the other hand, cell phones may continue to be used primarily for socializing through texting and calling.

The Political System

In addition to workplaces and faith institutions, the political system is a major factor in influencing young people's interest and participation in political and civic life. Political parties, in particular, have stoked public interest in politics through campaigns, fundraising, debates, and voter registration, and this was particularly true during the 2008 election cycle.

Whether political parties will be relevant in the future remains to be seen. In recent years, the two parties have become less important in the eyes of many

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[10] *See www.facebook.com for a tour of the social networking site.*

[11] *October, 2007 analysis by Hitwise.*

Americans, especially young people. Despite upticks in youth voter participation in recent elections, for example, young people continue to express skepticism about affiliating with a particular political party[12] —a trend that has extended to adults as well (Shea, 2004).

Explanations for young people's skepticism regarding politics and all that comes with it vary. Some say it's due to the demise of civic education in schools (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 2000). Others assert that young people feel that they have little impact in politics and that their voice "doesn't matter," which has led to a reluctance to participate more fully in the process (Marcelo, et. al., 2007).

Still others believe that young people are not apathetic at all, given their penchant for community service and volunteerism, and most recently, their extraordinary participation in the 2008 presidential election. Still, it is important to recognize that if there are no efforts to sustain that participation—and in meaningful ways—it is highly likely that young people will be as skeptical of the political system as they were prior to 2008.

As research indicates, young people tend to see the political system as something that has become distanced from encouraging meaningful and sustained participation, and instead, focuses primarily on media spin, consultant-driven image management, big money, and bureaucratic structures that value "face time" rather than results (Gibson, 2001). Even when young people do get involved in campaigns, much of their participation tends to be to folding envelopes and soliciting votes through door-to-door canvassing, which, while important, have rarely served as the impetus for longer-term and more meaningful participation.

These sentiments are even more pronounced among NCBY, many of whom perceive the political system and politics to be profoundly irrelevant and unresponsive to their needs and to those of their communities. A recent nationally representative study, for example, showed that two-thirds of NCBY surveyed said they believed they could "make little difference in politics,"

There is a dearth of traditional levers for engaging NCBY in civic and political activities as they move into adulthood and what currently exist are insufficient to ensure long-term civic engagement among this population.

compared to only one-third of college-bound youth. Fewer NCBY than college-bound youth also considered voting to be important or a duty (Lopez, et al., 2005). The result is a circular problem: NCBY are not tapped for political participation so they are less likely to be involved or vote. In turn, the political parties and other political organizations are much less likely to engage NCBY because they are less inclined to vote.

Summary

The life cycle steps that traditionally served to embed young people in the civic life of their communities are in need of re-envisioning. The steps from entry-level employment to marriage and child bearing no longer follow a normative path from adolescence to adulthood. These trends are particularly detrimental to NCBY who are less likely to have jobs with benefits, attend church regularly, or permanently identify with neighborhoods; thus, they are more likely to remain outside the grasp and view of politically-socializing institutions.

In short, there is a dearth of traditional levers for engaging NCBY in civic and political activities as they move into adulthood and what currently exist are insufficient to ensure long-term civic engagement among this population. To reach NCBY, therefore, new and strategically targeted efforts must be undertaken, with particular emphasis on incorporating tactics that reflect a better understanding of the complex structural barriers facing NCBY and that continue to prohibit more meaningful engagement in civic life.

[12] *Greenberg Quinlan Rosner/Polimetrix, Part II, September 2005. Retrieved from www.greenbergresearch.com on August 1, 2007.*

What Can Be Done to Engage NCBY in Civic And Political Life More Effectively?

The youth civic engagement field can lay claim to a strong, committed group of leaders and organizations that have been successful in increasing young people's participation in civic and political life. However, there continues to be formidable and systemic barriers that are, at the least, uninviting and, at the worst, discouraging for NCBY to become active and engaged citizens.

Today, most programs and strategies continue to overlook or only cursorily involve this population. The bulk of get-out-the-vote efforts are focused on college campuses where youth already inclined to be civically engaged congregate. Community service and volunteering efforts tend to recruit from the ranks of the educated and connected.

And while there are some programs that attempt to reach out to NCBY to increase their civic engagement, programs that take proactive and comprehensive steps to involve NCBY continue to be scarce. Even among organizations that do try to target their efforts to engaging young people from low-income neighborhoods, communities of color, or immigrant communities, most of those who end up participating tend to be college-bound (Harvard Family Research Project, 2007).

Engaging NCBY in political and civic life is challenging for many reasons.

As noted, engaging NCBY in political and civic life is challenging for many reasons. NCBY are not typically clustered within one institution (e.g., college campuses), and their movement across the life course is diverse (e.g., some are married and own homes, while others are single and unemployed).

The mutually reinforcing set of institutions (e.g., family, schools, workplace, churches, civic organizations, and informal community networks) that used to help instill a sense of civic identity has become fractured for NCBY. Family ties have weakened. Schools have pared down curricula to convey basics, neglecting the civics curriculum and opportunities for service-learning experiences.

Jobs increasingly have become impermanent, non-unionized, and low paying. Membership in voluntary associations has waned. And, informal networks have clustered so that NCBY interact more narrowly with one another rather than being extended outward to people with more resources. *In short, there are few opportunities to build social capital that would help connect NCBY to the larger civic and political sphere* (Putnam, 2000).

Additionally, there is no consistent framework used by those in the civic engagement field to describe, analyze, and address the complex needs of NCBY as they pertain to civic and political engagement, making it even more challenging to target this population in more effective ways. This lack of consistency has also made it difficult to discern "what works" and what doesn't with NCBY in ways that could help inform future efforts.

In a perfect world, NCBY would have access to more comprehensive civic-related activities that incorporate an understanding of important familial, community, and school-related factors that research has shown to be significant influences on NCBYs' ability to become fully participatory adults. These would also be available in every grade and beyond as NCBYs transition into adulthood.

But how can funders, scholars, practitioners, educators, and others who are committed to civic engagement for all people—including NCBY— help to make these goals a reality for millions of NCBY? What follows are some suggestions.

Research

Collaborate and increase the visibility of civic engagement and NCBY. Although support for scholarly research in civic engagement overall has increased in recent years, relatively few studies have been focused on civic engagement and NCBY. A first step may be to establish small "research pools"—groups of scholars interested in this issue—to share ideas, collaborate on larger studies, and/or publish group findings. These kinds of pools were instrumental in propelling other fields once seen as arcane or "fringe" into the mainstream, including infant studies and religious development.

Focus more research that answers key questions about the unique circumstances of NCBY as these circumstances relate to civic engagement, such as: What are the attitudes about and barriers to civic engagement among NCBY? What is the civic profile for emerging adult NCBY? Is there a difference in this profile between high school dropouts and those who completed high school but did not continue to college? What is the civic context of NCBY? What are the individual-level factors that lead NCBY to participate or not participate?

Funders

Support new demonstration projects that engage NCBY in political and civic activities, with the goal of encouraging sustained engagement. Relatively little is known about engaging NCBY in high school and emerging adulthood. Leveraging the cutting-edge knowledge about this cohort, innovative pilot and demonstration programs should be developed, implemented, and, most importantly, evaluated.

Make funding for any youth civic engagement program or initiative contingent on demonstrating whether or how it involves NCBY. This is consistent with the National Institute of Health's and the Department of Education's requirements to include information about less advantaged groups in proposals and reports. Funders, including the Corporation for National and Community Service, would be encouraging program providers to reach out to NCBY or, at least, to recognize that this population is important to target

Support applied research on NCBY and civic engagement. The findings from such studies, which could answer the questions noted above, could be used to inform innovative programs and strategies for engaging NCBY. Such studies could leverage existing data sets that include key variables on civic engagement and NCBY experiences, as well as new qualitative and quantitative studies that will provide a deeper understanding of the NCBY experience and the factors that encourage sustained civic engagement.

Support rigorous evaluation of existing programs' effectiveness in engaging NCBY and encouraging their civic participation. There have been too few rigorous evaluations conducted as to what works in engaging NCBY. Adequate funding for more rigorous evaluations—those that go beyond self-reports and case studies—of existing and model programs targeted to increasing civic engagement among NCBY would be a significant contribution to a field in desperate need of these data, especially for those interested in moving successful tactics to scale.

Federal and State Governments

Allot funds to Title I middle and high schools—which serve the largest percentage of NCBY—to enhance the civics curriculum, service-learning opportunities, and after-school programs aligned with community service. The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (Serve America Act), recently passed in Congress, would provide opportunities through Learn and Serve for youth from low-income communities to engage in service to improve their communities. This legislation, however, is not necessarily designed to impact what happens within the school building in more disadvantaged schools. By emphasizing the need to impact Title 1 schools, through the Serve America Act, this strategy can be enacted with the help of new research findings on effective teaching approaches for generating civil discussion of important controversial issues, democratic practices in the classroom, techniques for integrating service-learning with academic material and existing community organizations, and the impact of giving youth a voice in school decision-making.

Ensure that newly allocated funds for AmeriCorps and other forms of national and community service offer additional enrollment opportunities for NBCY and that existing programs targeting NCBY have adequate funding. The passage of the Serve America Act is resulting in funding nearly 200,000 additional Americorps members. This new funding presents a historic opportunity to expand outreach to NCBY and engage them in service activities. In addition, AmeriCorps-supported programs that do focus on NCBY—such as YouthBuild and Conservation Corps—should be expanded and used as models that can be examined as to which strategies are most effective in increasing the civic and political engagement of this population. These strategies, in turn, could be used as the basis for new programs to reach NCBY, as well as components to incorporate into existing organizations.

Provide seed funding to municipalities to form youth-in-governance initiatives that include NCBY. These initiatives would have the multiple benefits of effectively addressing the needs of the diversity of youth in a community, showing NCBY in a community that government is responsive to their needs, and building the skills of NCBY who reside on municipal boards. The White House's Social Innovation Fund could include stipulations that youth be involved in the development and oversight of projects, and that the youth are representative of their community.

Schools and School Systems (K-12)

Create and support workshops to train teachers of civics in NCBY schools. School-based civic education requires special skills and knowledge, such as the ability to moderate discussions of current events. Professional development programs for teachers of civics improve the results for students (Torney-Purta, Barber, and Richardson 2005), but they tend to serve teachers in more privileged schools and communities. Opportunities could be funded for seminars and courses (building on some already offered by nonprofits such as the Center for Civic Education, Streetlaw, and the Constitutional Rights Foundation), but with special preferences for Title I teachers.

Form stronger connections with service-providing community organizations, especially in neighborhoods with more NCBY, to create more diverse and enrich-ing 'real world' experiences through which NCBY can practice civic skills that address issues affecting their lives. These connections to civic organizations could also serve as important resources for NCBY—including information, jobs, contacts, networks—as they transition from students to adults who may then be more inclined to participate in these kinds of community institutions later in life.

Offer financial support and training for student governments in NCBY schools and encourage urban school districts to empower student governments to be part of substantive school governance.

Higher Education

Focus on community colleges as key institutions in reaching out to, teaching, and training NCBY. Community colleges tend to involve more diverse populations, ranging from youth who need a bridge to a four-year institution to NCBY in need of specific job skills. They are also closely connected to their sponsoring communities, often providing skills training that responds to the needs of local businesses, government, and non-profit employers. And because community colleges are focused on integrating academic class work and vocational training, they are well-positioned to frame employment as "civic work"—work that is needed by and enhances the community.

For example, in some areas that have moved from a manufacturing to information/technology-based economy that demands new skill sets, community colleges have stepped in to help residents gain those new skills. In the same vein, community colleges can foster a civic ethic by offering training leading to jobs (e.g., safety or health sector jobs) that contribute to civic renewal (Alperovitz, 2006; Colby, et al., 2002; Kenny, et al., 2002).

Develop new ways of marketing to NCBY to encourage their participation in college-based civic engagement efforts. While colleges and universities have ramped up their efforts to target NCBY as potential students, they have not been as proactive in reaching out to NCBY who are not interested in attending college but who can and should be partners in college-based civic engagement initiatives—from service-learning projects and community-based learning to voter reg-

istration and issue campaigns. Higher education institutions that have done this or are experimenting with new ways to do this need to be encouraged and publicized more broadly.

Military

Support experimental and existing military programs—which are populated largely by NCBY—to include and emphasize civic history and the nature of citizenship in their training of new recruits. Voluntary associations of veterans of military service should also sponsor service projects in their local communities to reach NCBY and give them new opportunities to experience the relationship between "civic work" and patriotic values—programs that would provide bridging social capital that is relatively scarce in areas where many NCBY live.

Given research showing that military veterans, especially those who came from NCBY backgrounds, tend to lead healthy civic lives, it is particularly important to capitalize on this venue as one that is promising for civic engagement outreach among NCBY. Veterans might also be able to serve as role models for young NCBY who might otherwise remain distanced from civic-minded adults, and/or to serve as mentors to NCBY youth, either as individuals or through youth-serving organizations such as Boy and Girl Scouts, 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc. (Putnam, 2000; Brokaw, 2004; Moskos & Butler, 1996; Teigen, 2006).

Political/Advocacy Organizations

Expand the view of youth political engagement beyond voting or issue-specific campaigns. Get-out-the-youth-vote and issue campaigns are important and effective ways to attract young people to becoming more involved in politics and political processes. However, they might not be sufficient to sustain young people's interest or, more important, support their development into political actors able and willing to identify and address the issues they define as important and in ways they think are appropriate.

This is particularly important in efforts to encourage NCBY, who are more likely to view politics and political processes as unresponsive or irrelevant to their concerns. NCBY are also less likely to be targeted by political campaigns and other political organizations because they are harder to reach and less likely to vote. When they are targeted, they are often relegated to being foot soldiers for carrying out agendas they had little hand in creating and/or constituents to be rallied in support of a candidate.

More energy, therefore, needs to be focused on providing meaningful political participation opportunities after elections and in ways that allow young people, particularly NCBY, to participate more meaningfully and substantively in whatever efforts they choose to be involved in. Finally, more effort should be made to involve all young people who have become disenchanted with the political system in attempts to reform it.

"Make space" for young people in local community organizing efforts. Organizing has long been an effective strategy for empowering community residents, particularly those who are disenfranchised, to make their voices heard about issues that concern them, as well as take collective action in addressing those issues. Similar to political organizations, however, organizing efforts can frequently overlook young people and/or treat them as "constituents" to be rallied around an agenda they had little voice in creating. When organizing does invite young people to be involved in meaningful ways and experiencing themselves as political actors, it can help enhance their political/civic identities and, in turn, encourage participation as adults. Adults, also, can benefit from young people's energy, insights, and commitment in these kinds of efforts.

Community Institutions

Take the lead in convening and providing venues for public problem-solving meetings that bring together wider and more diverse cross-sections of communities to work collectively in addressing common issues. Community civic engagement is often the purview of those who are already more likely to be civically engaged and/or who have the wherewithal and incentive to participate. In recent years, however, several communities across the country—particularly those facing issues that have tended to pit residents against one another—have worked with community nonprofits,

schools, and local businesses to convene meetings of a wide swath of the community to find common ground on what residents see as most important issues in their community. They are also devising new strategies to collectively address those issues. Young people, including NCBY, are playing important roles in these meetings, as well as in "mapping" their communities to identify critical issues, problem areas, and other affecting factors.

Put young people on boards and other decision-making bodies. In recent years, increasing numbers of local governments and community institutions are including more young people on their boards and/or decision-making bodies. While auspicious, these efforts need to ensure that they include sufficient representation of NCBY who may provide different and "real life" perspectives on community issues and/or problems. Further, by participating in these processes, NCBY will be exposed to democracy in action, potentially encouraging longer-term participation not only among them, but also their peers and other youth with whom they connect.

Create more out-of-school programs for NCBY that provide civic opportunities and education. These kinds of programs could be incorporated into the affiliates of national organizations with deep connections in communities where NCBY live, such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, 4-H Clubs, and others—some of which are already developing or have developed such programs.

Businesses

Allow hourly and lower-wage workers—which include a disproportionate number of NCBY—opportunities to volunteer in their communities, and reward that service. Civic engagement organizations should also work with employers of lower-wage workers to facilitate these opportunities and encourage their participation by offering stronger arguments as to the potential benefits workplace volunteering programs have on employees and employers, such as increasing workplace skills.

Technology

Develop, test, and make available effective technologically-driven social media tools and systems that have the potential to reach and engage NCBY in civic and political issues, systems, and programs. Online activism is evolving at an exponential rate, with initiatives through social networking sites such as Face Book and through content specific sites such as Youth-Noise, WireTap, and the Youth Policy Action Center. These online communities enable young people to organize virtual campaigns on issues about which they are passionate (which, at times, result in on-the-ground mobilization).

Little is known, though, about the effectiveness of these campaigns to change policy or the effectiveness of these media to engage youth in sustained political activities (Montgomery, et. al, 2004). Furthermore, demographic information is typically not captured, leaving a gap in understanding about whether NCBY are a part of these communities. More information and more experimentation with these new civic venues is warranted to determine their effectiveness in engaging young people, especially NCBY. If sites better understand these users and engaging them in substantive activities, they might retain NCBY on the site longer, increasing their reception of the advertising that populates the site. Overall, using effective strategies could strengthen the civic identity of the users.

Conclusion:

There is a stark inequity in civic-related resources and opportunities available to college-bound youth and non-college-bound youth that leads to differences in civic and political participation between the two cohorts. Those differences are not inherent "traits," but rather are due to where and how resources and opportunities are provided. Based on rigorous research, it is highly likely that efforts to forge this equity will pay off in enhancing the civic development of NCBY and, in turn, enliven the civic and political environments in which they will become the next generation of citizens and leaders.

It is important to note that NCBY were not always as disconnected as they appear to have become in the last quarter of the 20th century. During the first 75 years of that century, college had not yet emerged as the gateway to the middle and upper classes it has since become, NCBY had access to a wider and richer array of local institutions, associations, clubs, and networks that encouraged civic engagement.

There are signs, however, that the 21st century may bring new opportunities for the kind of civic engagement that NCBY once enjoyed. Today, there are myriad avenues for getting involved. Among them: AmeriCorps programs, online deliberations and debates, meet-ups through new social media tools, national town hall meetings, and others, all of which are helping to connect diverse citizens.

Without adequate intention, though, these changes will leave NCBY in a spiral of civic exclusion that will leave their voices and actions outside of a supposedly representative democracy. Our knowledge of how to engage NCBY is now antiquated. New, tested strategies are needed, but they will not emerge organically. A new generation of researchers and activists, including NCBY themselves, should be encouraged and supported to pursue this avenue.

> *There are signs, however, that the 21st century may bring new opportunities for the kind of civic engagement that NCBY once enjoyed .*

The political system should also be held accountable for the ways in which it has prohibited participation among NCBY, as well as its tendency to view young people, including NCBY, as "constituents," rather than as political actors and active change agents. New incentives need to be developed for nonprofits, universities, and corporations to reach out to NCBY. They should also develop and provide an infrastructure that enables NCBY employees and constituents to serve their communities and their country.

In short, no single entity is solely accountable for the civic disengagement of NCBY, but every entity is individually responsible for providing an equitable invitation to citizenship. With such leadership and intention, it is highly likely that the country will return to de Tocqueville's view that "the social condition of America is eminently democratic" because it involves all people, not just a few.

> ***....no single entity is solely accountable for the civic disengagement of NCBY, but every entity is individually responsible for providing an equitable invitation to citizenship...***

Cherry Hill and Camden: A Study in Contrast

On a typical Saturday, a visitor to a middle-income suburb in Cherry Hill, NJ, would likely witness a thriving civic life in the community's parks and public spaces. S/he would see lined soccer fields, each populated with youth in uniforms who are being instructed by coaches and monitored by referees. Parents would be watching the game while exchanging information about school, coming social events, and community news.

For people in this community, soccer isn't just a game; it's a social and civic gathering. Soccer leagues are one of many associations that typify the ability of communities self-organize, specifically by selecting teams, scheduling games, teaching the rudiments of the sport, and conveying the pleasures and rules of amateur athletic contests. Saturday soccer is also an event through which children's peer networks are reinforced, families have the chance to get to know one another, and people have opportunities to talk about current local issues with others. Relationships are formed, and social capital is generated along with trust—all of which are carried through the rest of the week. Players continue to interact at school, and parents form bonds with one another that spill over into dinner dates, book clubs, or family outings.

Contrast the above with what the same visitor would see in many inner-city parks. In Camden, NJ, for example, s/he would see mostly minority players—if there are even enough to form a team—using scuffed and worn soccer balls on fields pockmarked with divots and weeds. Few parents or siblings flank the sidelines. The two or three coaches who are there do all they can to encourage players, including meeting with them after the practice or game to talk about how they're doing in school, but they have limited time to focus on the number of players who want or need their attention. Much of the conversation centers around the violence, drug abuse, and poverty that surrounds the players on a daily basis.

For people living in places like Camden—one of the poorest cities in the country—social capital is an elusive concept. With limited financial resources, it is difficult to focus on anything but the very basic needs such as getting a job or feeding a family. As a result, the types of events and gatherings that are taken for granted in more affluent communities might be viewed as a luxury by those living in under-resourced areas. As a result, youth have less opportunity to develop a civic consciousness and, to them, the notion of "civic life" becomes something quite removed from their everyday experiences.

These two communities illustrate the stark contrasts between what is often advocated by civic engagement proponents and the reality of life for millions of young people who have little incentive or wherewithal to be civically engaged. Without more attention to this reality—and the inequitable invitation to citizenship for non-college-bound youth—attempts to engage all young people in civic and political processes will ultimately fail.

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