Project on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship:  
A Partial Review of Current Conversations around Citizenship and Civic Engagement

Introduction

The ideas of who is a citizen, and what citizenship entails have evolved over time. Classical notions of citizenship were narrowly defined and exclusionary, resting on the idea that polities were autonomous, free to act at will, and had supreme authority over their political members within a given territory.¹ Only those who were granted the opportunity to become a citizen—or simply considered one outright—could participate in state affairs, albeit to varying degrees.

From the state’s inception, there has been a sense that American citizens had rights, but also responsibilities. Quotes from the Founding Fathers make clear that they believed democracy and liberty had to be safeguarded and maintained, and that maintenance was predicated on an educated citizenry.² Accordingly, the concepts of civics education and civic engagement have deep roots in the United States. Advancements made through movements for the rights of groups previously excluded from exercising full political membership³, along with technological advances and the introduction of the internet, cell phones, and social media have led to deeper questioning of what constitutes civic engagement with a focus on who engages civically, in what ways, when, where and how frequently. There has also been a shift from merely examining who is a citizen and how citizenship is defined to looking at how individuals view themselves as citizens and what they perceive are their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Another trend in the field has been a call to more consistently incorporate civics education into the lives of students by creating national standards for civics education. Some researchers believe that making civics education a more pronounced part of students’ lives would help to make them better informed citizens, while others go a step further and believe that it would encourage youth engagement that would set the stage for lifelong civic engagement, stretching into adulthood.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a partial overview of the research underway that highlights current conversations taking place around citizenship and civic engagement. It is not, by any means, an exhaustive list.

³ The term “rights movements” used here is inclusive of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the Feminist Movement, and the LGBTQI movements.
Gauging Civic Engagement in the U.S.

*The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC)*

Private organizations, universities, government officials, and communities have partnered to understand the level of American civic engagement, and to measure the impact of that engagement (or lack thereof) within their communities and populations of interest. Pooling their resources and leveraging their areas of expertise, these entities have produced thoughtful reports and identified telling trends.

Describing civic health as “the way that communities are organized to define and address public problems,” the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) is interested in using civic data to encourage “public dialogue about the future of citizenship in America, and to drive sustainable civic strategies.”4 NCoC collaborated with the Saguaro Seminar at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts’ Tisch College of Civic Life, to develop the Civic Health Index (CHI), which was presented in a September 2006 report titled, “Broken Engagement: America's Civic Health Index.”5 The Index is based on data collected from across the country from 1975 to 2004, and includes 40 civic health indicators across nine categories: 1) connecting to civic and religious groups, 2) trusting other people, 3) connecting to others through family and friends, 4) giving and volunteering, 5) staying informed, 6) understanding civics and politics, 7) participating in politics, 8) trusting and feeling connected to major institutions, and 9) expressing political views.

The 45-page report provides breakdowns of large samples by state, race/ethnicity, age, and educational level and highlighted some dismal as well as hopeful trends. NCoC found that there had been “steep declines in Americans' civic participation and engagement over thirty years” and the declines “were especially pronounced among working-class Americans and high school dropouts, who are almost completely missing from the civic lives of their communities.”6 At the same time, there was increasing political engagement since the late 1990s, and indications that there has been a resurgence in volunteering over the last decade, particularly among youth.

Since issuing its seminal CHI report in 2006, NCoC has conducted civic health research annually on a national level. The organization partnered with three states in 2008 to produce local CHI reports and currently collaborates with partner organizations in more than thirty communities and states, with the goal of having such partnerships in all fifty states and the District of Columbia by 2020. Some of the reports produced are broadly focused, such as “2007 National CHI: Millennials as a Civic Force,”7 while others are more narrowly focused, like “2015 Michigan CHI: Differing Civic Engagement by Generation.”8 Over the years, NCoC has consistently found that “communities with strong indicators of civic health have higher employment rates, stronger

---

4 See the National Conference on Citizenship, [http://www.ncoc.org](http://www.ncoc.org)
6 Ibid.
schools, better physical health, and more responsive governments.” In total, NCoC, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and partner teams at the community level have together published 76 national, state, and local CHI reports. Each report contains substantive findings accompanied by rich data and can be downloaded from the NCoC website.

**Joint Economic Committee of Congress (JEC): The Social Capital Project (SCP)**

In May 2017, Utah Senator, Mike Lee, launched the Social Capital Project (SCP) to examine the decline in civic engagement and social cohesion in American life. SCP is a multiyear research project that will examine the “evolving nature, quality, and importance” of what Senator Lee terms American “associational life,” which refers to “the web of social relationships through which we pursue joint endeavors,” such as our families, communities, religious congregations, and workplaces. All of these institutions, according to Senator Lee, are imperative to forming an individual’s character and providing them with a sense of purpose and meaning for facing life’s challenges. The initiative’s goal is four-fold—to help legislators, and the American public, better understand: 1) why the health of our associational life feels compromised, 2) what consequences have followed from changes in American society’s middle social layers, 3) why some communities have more social cohesion and civic engagement than others, and 4) what practices can be implemented (or ceased) to improve the state of American social capital. The mechanism for conducting the research will be a series of hearings and reports.

SCP’s first report, which was authored by a Joint Economic Committee (JEC) research team, was released in May 2017. After hearing testimony from experts Robert Putnam, Mario Small, Yuval Levin and Charles Murray, and examining data spanning 46 years (1970 to 2016), the JEC research team concluded that, overall, “rising affluence has made associational life less necessary for purposes of gaining material benefits, but [Americans] have lost much by doing less together.” Other key conclusions regarding each of the institutions made in the 81-page report were:

**Family:** Fewer living in families, no less time spent with our families, later marriage and childbirth, fewer children, more single parenthood

---

9 See the National Conference on Citizenship, [http://www.ncoc.org](http://www.ncoc.org)


11 This information is taken directly from Senator Lee’s webpage but can also be found in the SCP’s report. See [https://www.lee.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/socialcapitalproject](https://www.lee.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/socialcapitalproject) and “What We Do Together: The State of Associational Life in America,” pp. 2-5, [https://www.lee.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/b5f224e0-98f7-40f6-a814-860269e714d8/what-we-do-together.pdf](https://www.lee.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/b5f224e0-98f7-40f6-a814-860269e714d8/what-we-do-together.pdf)

12 Ibid.
• Between 1975 and 2011, the share of three- and four-year-olds cared for by a parent during the day declined from 80 percent to somewhere between 24 and 48 percent. But parents are spending no less time with their children overall.

• Between 1973 and 2016, the percentage of Americans age 18-64 who lived with a relative declined from 92 percent to 79 percent. The decline was driven by a dramatic 21-point drop in the percentage who were living with a spouse, from 71 percent to 50 percent.

• In 1970, there were 76.5 marriages per 1,000 unmarried women aged 15 and older. As of 2015, that rate had declined by more than half to 32 per thousand.

• In 1970, 56 percent of American families included at least one child, but by 2016 just 42 percent did. The average family with children had 2.3 children in 1970 but just 1.9 in 2016. Among all families—with or without children—the average number of children per family has dropped from 1.3 to 0.8.

• Between 1970 and 2016, the share of children being raised by a single parent (or by neither parent) rose from 15 percent to 31 percent.

• Between 1970 and 2015, births to single mothers rose from 11 percent of all births to 40 percent.

Religion: Lower membership and attendance, fewer raised in a religious tradition, less confidence in organized religion

• In the early 1970s, nearly seven in ten adults in America were still members of a church or synagogue. While fewer Americans attended religious service regularly, 50 to 57 percent did so at least once per month. Today, just 55 percent of adults are members of a church or synagogue, while just 42 to 44 percent attend religious service at least monthly.

• In the early 1970s, 98 percent of adults had been raised in a religion, and just 5 percent reported no religious preference. Today, however, the share of adults who report having been raised in a religion is down to 91 percent, and 18 to 22 percent of adults report no religious preference.

• In 1973, two-thirds of adults had “quite a lot” or “a great deal” of confidence in “the church or organized religion,” and in another survey the same year, 36 percent reported “a great deal” of confidence in organized religion. By 2016, those numbers had fallen to 41 percent and 20 percent, respectively.
Community: Less time with neighbors, no less time with friends, less racial segregation, more class segregation, less trust generally and in institutions but no less trust in friends or local government, no less volunteering, less voting, mixed trends on political engagement

- Between 1974 and 2016, the percent of adults who said they spend a social evening with a neighbor at least several times a week fell from 30 percent to 19 percent.

- Between 1970 and the early 2010s, the share of families in large metropolitan areas who lived in middle-income neighborhoods declined from 65 percent to 40 percent. Over that same time period the share of families living in poor neighborhoods rose from 19 percent to 30 percent, and those living in affluent neighborhoods rose from 17 percent to 30 percent.

- Between 1972 and 2016, the share of adults who thought most people could be trusted declined from 46 percent to 31 percent. Between 1974 and 2016, the number of Americans expressing a great deal or fair amount of trust in the judgement (sic) of the American people “under our democratic system about the issues facing our country” fell from 83 percent to 56 percent.

- Between 1974 and 2015, the share of adults that did any volunteering who reported volunteering for at least 100 hours increased from 28 percent to 34 percent.

- Between 1972 and 2012, the share of the voting-age population that was registered to vote fell from 72 percent to 65 percent, and the trend was similar for the nonpresidential election years of 1974 and 2014. Correspondingly, between 1972 and 2012, voting rates fell from 63 percent to 57 percent (and fell from 1974 to 2014).

- Between 1972 and 2008, the share of people saying they follow “what’s going on in government and public affairs” declined from 36 percent to 26 percent.

- Between 1972 and 2012, the share of Americans who tried to persuade someone else to vote a particular way increased from 32 percent to 40 percent.

Work: Less time with coworkers off the job, little change in commuting time, more work among women, less work among men, more “alternative work arrangements,” part-time or part-year work no more common, longer job tenure, less union membership, more occupational licensing

- Between the mid-1970s and 2012, the average amount of time Americans between the ages of 25 and 54 spent with their coworkers outside the workplace fell from about two-and-a-half hours to just under one hour.

- The share of workers living and working in different counties was 26 percent in 1970 and 27 percent in the second half of the 2000s, and commuting time has risen only modestly since 1980.
• Between the mid-1970s and 2012, among 25- to 54-year-olds, time at work rose 4 percent. The story was very different for men and women though. Hours at work rose 27 percent among women. Among men, hours at work fell by 9 percent between the mid-1970s and 2012.

• Work has become rarer, in particular, among men with less education. From the mid-1970s to 2012, hours at work fell by just 2 percent among men with a college degree or an advanced degree, compared with 14 percent among those with no more than a high school education.

• Between 1995 and 2015, workers in “alternative work arrangements” (e.g., temp jobs, independent contracting, etc.) grew from 9 percent to 16 percent of the workforce.

• Since 2004, median job tenure has been higher than its 1973 level, indicating that workers are staying in their jobs longer than in the past.

• Between 1970 and 2015, union membership declined from about 27 percent to 11 percent of all wage and salary workers.

Youth and Civic Engagement

The Spencer Foundation: How Young People Develop Long-Lasting Habits of Civic Engagement

In June 2008, Spencer Foundation sponsored meetings brought together scholars, experts, practitioners and others to discuss how young people develop long-lasting habits of civic engagement. The group’s goal was to create a “five to ten year research agenda” that would help Spencer get a “sense of how useful current theories are regarding how to develop young people’s commitment to the common good;” identify “what is known and what still needs to be learned about how to educate young people for life-long active citizenship;” and suggest “strategies for increasing knowledge sharing between researchers and practitioners.” Three conclusions were drawn from the gatherings:

1) There needs to be more research on the civic engagement of youth who are not in college.

2) More attention should be paid to the civic development of youth who are understudied because of their group status (such as young minority males; immigrant youth; the children of immigrants; and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth).

3) There is a need for more research on civic engagement as a process.

---

When President Barack Obama was able to successfully harness new technology to build a political brand and garner the support of 66 percent of voters under age 30\(^\text{14}\) to win the election in November 2008, interest in youth civic engagement in the age of social media heightened. The prominent role social media played in shaping the political debates that fueled the wave of protests that swept through the Arab world (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Morocco) beginning in December 2010, underscored interest in understanding how social media has affected civic engagement among the young.\(^\text{15}\)

*The MacArthur Foundation: Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics (YPP)*

Funded by the MacArthur Foundation, the Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics (YPP) was created to explore how social media, the Internet and digital communications tools have influenced young people’s civic engagement with participatory politics. With the goals of explaining a new paradigm of what it means to be a citizen, and what it means to be civically engaged in the 21\(^{\text{st}}\) century for a new generation of Americans, the research network undertakes projects guided by four pertinent questions\(^\text{16}\):

- How is engagement with digital media through the Internet, smart phones, and iPads, for example, reshaping the manner in which young people participate in public life?
- What is the relationship between young people's online activities and their political participation?
- How frequently do young people engage in civic or political activities through the use of digital media? Is such participation equitably distributed among different groups of youth?
- How can policy makers, educators and software designer promote frequent, equitable and meaningful political engagement among youth through the use of digital media?

The group has launched six major research projects so far:

1. **Digital Activism, Global Dimensions**, which studies how young people around the globe contribute to social change using social media with the goals of defining the tools and techniques activists employ as well as delineating different models of digital activism;

2. **E-Publics**, a project that investigates how the increased use of digital media has changed American public life;


3. **Good Participation**, focused on understanding what young people who are members or leaders of groups concerned with political and social issues think of citizenship and its meaning in their lives, the kinds of civic and political activities they are involved in, and how they use new media;

4. **Media Activism and Participatory Politics**, aimed at detailed case studies of networks and organizations that promote youth civic and political participation to highlight best practices and help these youth become involved and informed citizens;

5. **The Youth & Participatory Politics Survey Project**, an initiative that entails gathering survey data from more than 2,500 young people after the 2008 and 2012 elections to understand youth political and civic life attitudes, the extent of their usage of digital media and their engagement in participatory politics; and

6. **Youth Media and Its Digital Afterlife**, which looks at how different types of youth generated media change after public release, and what those changes tell us about youth expressions in the public sphere as well as the role of the “youth voice” in participatory politics.

YPP released three working papers that shed light on American youth political practices in general, and provided insights into black youth activism. Overall, the researchers of YPP surmise that, "what we have come to see as a decline in civic engagement is better understood as the passing away of one model of [the] public sphere conjoined with the emergence of a new model."

Issued in March 2014, “Youth, New Media, and the Rise of Participatory Politics”17 looked at how new media may be changing youth political practices and expectations. The study’s focus of analysis was on early adopters of new media and yielded three important findings. First, there was evidence that new media facilitates participatory politics in the way of “interactive, peer-based acts through which individuals and groups seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern.” Second, there was evidence that suggested that new media provided new opportunities for political voice and discussion, thereby increasing the role of participatory politics in public life. And, third, participatory politics in the digital era has created “many possibilities for civic and political participation in the public sphere…[enabling] individuals to tap vast stores of information, consider diverse views, communicate with potentially large audiences, mobilize others, and work collaboratively for social change, all outside of formal civic and political organizations.” The authors asserted that we need to “deepen our conceptual and empirical understanding of the changes now occurring” as we may well be at a critical moment in history in regard to increasing participatory politics and engaging young people.

“Doing Civics in the Digital Age: Casual, Purposeful, and Strategic Approaches to Participatory Politics,”18 YPP’s second working paper, was issued in September 2015 and delved deeper into

---


18 See “Doing Civics in the Digital Age: Casual, Purposeful, and Strategic Approaches to Participatory Politics,” by
how youths between the ages of 15 and 25 utilize Twitter, Facebook, and other online tools to address community and world issues. Researchers looked at reported media uses as part of five participatory practices: 1) investigation, 2) circulation, 3) production, 4) dialogue and feedback, and 5) mobilization, and posit three distinct approaches to new media-enabled participation: 1) casual, 2) purposeful, and 3) strategic. Data from in-depth interviews with 70 civically and politically active youth revealed that youth do not stick to one approach. More specifically, “civic youth are more likely to use digital media for some practices—such as circulation, production, and investigation—and traditional means for others—such as dialogue and feedback, and mobilization.” And while they put these practices into action in a variety of ways, “fewer than 10 percent describe strategic media use for more than two practices.” Sometimes youth described having used strategies that were insufficient to meet the grand aspirations they described, leading the researchers to conclude that “youth…need supports to develop the necessary skills to do participatory politics…[as well as] ongoing supports to help them reflect on the personal opportunities and risks that can attend to online action, and to manage the ‘digital afterlives’ of their online choices.” Along with calling for increased civics education for students, YPP cites a need for “designing classroom materials focused on the five participatory practices” as “civic education in the digital era…should include supports for the development of new media literacies.”

The third YPP working paper was issued in May 2016. Authored by Nathan Jamel Riemer and titled, “And then the Zimmerman verdict happens…” Black Marginalization, New Media and Contemporary Black Activism,” this report identified concurrent positive and negative trends for African American youth. Riemer acknowledges that new media has been empowering for those who “experience collective trauma and collective feelings of marginalization” because they now have a wider range of possibilities for collective response than they ever did with traditional mass media. In effect, African American youth are afforded greater opportunities to voice their opinions and influence politics with social media and new media. At the same time, Riemer states that “the use of new media and social media likely contribute to the spread of collective trauma caused by perpetual racial crises.” Despite any negative effects, Riemer reasons that new media and social media have made it possible for “a larger number of individuals and organizations to participate in media framing and agenda-setting processes” by allowing them to produce and distribute their own media, all of which has directly resulted in the inclusion of marginalized voices and an increase in political and civic engagement.

Opportunity Nation (ON) & Measure of America (MOA): Youth Civic Engagement and Economic Opportunity

There is growing literature regarding political and civic engagement of ethnic and racial minority populations, with most studies focusing on individual groups. Despite this fact, there remains

---

Margaret Rundle, Emily Weinstein, Howard Gardner, and Carrie James, 9/30/15, [https://ypp.dmlcentral.net/sites/default/files/publications/YPP_WorkinPaper_02.pdf](https://ypp.dmlcentral.net/sites/default/files/publications/YPP_WorkinPaper_02.pdf)


significant gaps in the research, particularly in regard to disconnected youth, Native Americans, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTIQ) communities.

Opportunity Nation is a bipartisan coalition made up of more than 350 organizations from across the country that have come together to create economic mobility for all Americans, and to close the economic gap between social classes. Measure of America (MOA) is “a nonpartisan project of the nonprofit Social Science Research Council founded in 2007 to create easy-to-use yet methodologically sound tools for understanding well-being and opportunity in America.” ON and MOA have independently and together conducted research that has added to what we know about the correlation between civic engagement and economic opportunity.

In September 2014, ON and MOA partnered and published a 36-page report titled, “Connecting Youth and Strengthening Communities: The Data Behind Civic Engagement and Economic Opportunity.” Using the Opportunity Index, which ON created in 2011, the study “focused on five forms of civic involvement frequently associated with pathways to building social capital”:


21 Disconnected youth is defined as “teenagers and young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school.” See Social Science Research Council, [https://www.ssrc.org/programs/component/moa/youth-disconnection/](https://www.ssrc.org/programs/component/moa/youth-disconnection/)

22 Native American youth are a prime example of an understudied population owing to their group status and studies on Native American youth civic development and civic engagement are scarce. However, although the Native American population in the U.S. as a whole is rather small, it is a young population with a median age of 31, and “they are projected to grow to over 11 million in 2060.” By comparison, the overall median age is 37. If these projections are correct, Native Americans would account for almost 3 percent of the U.S. population. See “Civic engagement and political participation among American Indians and Alaska natives in the US,” 2016, [http://edwardvargas.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Al_NA-Voting_PGI.pdf](http://edwardvargas.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Al_NA-Voting_PGI.pdf)

23 Studies on the LGBTIQ communities and civic engagement are limited, yet growing. In 2013, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network published a report, “Out Online: The Experiences of LGBT Youth on the Internet,” that found that LGBT youth reported high rates of civic engagement online, including having taken part in an online community that supports a cause or issues (77%), gotten the word out about a cause or an issue (76%), written a blog post or posted comments on another blog about a cause or an issue (68%) and used the Internet to participate in or recruit people for an event or activity (51%).” See O. Jenzen & I. Karl, (2014) Make, share, care: Social media and LGBTQ youth engagement. *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*, No.5. (http://adanewmedia.org/2014/07/issue5-jenzenkarl/)

24 See Measure of America, [https://www.ssrc.org/programs/view/moa/](https://www.ssrc.org/programs/view/moa/)

25 The Opportunity Index is “an annual composite measure at the state and county levels of economic, educational and civic factors that foster opportunity and is designed to help identify concrete solutions to lagging conditions for opportunity and economic mobility.” See [https://opportunitynation.org/opportunity-index](https://opportunitynation.org/opportunity-index)
volunteering; participation in any organization (including civic/service, sports, school, recreational, religious); participation in a civic/service organization (including charitable and fraternal); working with neighbors to solve a problem; and doing favors for neighbors. They found that 26:

- Youth who volunteer are considerably less likely than their non-volunteering peers to be disconnected from work and school.
- Civic engagement – specifically volunteering and participation in a civic or service organization – is a significant predictor of economic opportunity across states.
- Volunteerism has an inverse relationship with income inequality. In places with higher rates of volunteerism, income inequality tends to be lower.

Youth Disconnection is one of MOA’s program components and there have been four reports published under this component to date:

- Promising Gains, Persistent Gaps (3/2017)
- Zeroing In on Place and Race (6/2015)
- Halve the Gap by 2030 (10/2013)
- One in Seven (9/2012) 27

Although it is not the most recent report from MOA’s youth disconnection program, “Zeroing In on Place and Race” is perhaps the most valuable report to researchers of civic engagement because MOA again partnered with ON and specifically looked at youth civic engagement practices. The conclusions drawn in “Zeroing In” echo the three overarching conclusions of “Connecting Youth and Strengthening Communities,” adding:

“…evidence suggests that civic engagement…may help youth, particularly low-income teens and young adults, build social capital and skills that can help them find meaningful education and career pathways…likelihood that a young person will be disconnected drops nearly in half if he or she volunteers.” 28

Youth Civic Education

Providing Youth with Knowledge and Tools for Social Media and Civic Engagement

There is a chorus of voices calling for greater attention to be paid to civics education and understanding youth understandings of civics education and engagement. Many advocate for the development of supports for youth to equip them with the necessary tools needed to navigate social media and life online as well as to promote civic engagement among this demographic.29

In an October 2016 *Washington Post* article, Benjamin Bowyer and Joseph Kahne provided further analysis of the data from the Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics (YPP) highlighting the need for providing civics education and supports 30:

1. When young people are involved in nonpolitical online communities, they become more likely to participate in politics.

   Young people who were active online (non-politically) in 2013 tended to become more politically active two years later. Specifically, friendship-driven activity online in 2013 led to more online political activity. And interest-driven activity online resulted in more offline political action, like going to an event or donating money.

2. Young people involved in nonpolitical online communities become more likely to take part in political discussions online and to be encouraged to vote.

   Young people who engaged in interest-driven activity online in 2013, over time, became more likely to participate in online political discussions. And those young people who took part in online political discussions became more likely to engage in online participatory politics. Similarly, young people who engaged in interest-driven activity online in 2013 also became more likely to have someone online ask them to participate in politics. And those young people who were asked to participate became more likely to vote in the 2014 elections.

3. Young people with large online social network are more likely to be exposed to politics.

   All of this was especially true among those young people who had the largest online social networks (the number of “friends” or “followers” that they have on social

---


networking sites like Facebook or Twitter). Young people who in 2013 who were heavily engaged in interest-driven activity online and who had relatively large social networks became more likely to have political discussions online, to be asked to get involved in politics, to express themselves politically through social media, to vote and to take other political actions.

YPP researchers conclude that online communities may be part of the solution rather than the problem. What seems to be clear from the data is that online communities likely provide pathways into political engagement. According to the Pew Research Center, 92 percent of young people ages 13 to 17 go online daily, and close to a quarter of that number say that they are online nearly constantly.\(^{31}\) Further, nearly 57 percent “of highly engaged social media users feel that social media conversations are less politically correct than those they see elsewhere,” suggesting that they are concerned about the “tone and tenor of social media conversation.”\(^{32}\)

**Resources Available to Researchers of Civic Engagement**

*Pew Research Center: Internet and American Life Project*

For more than a decade, the Pew Research Center has produced reports “exploring the impact of the internet on families, communities, work and home, daily life, education, health care, and civic and political life” as part of its Internet and American Life Project.\(^{33}\) Researchers have access to reports and raw data sets from those reports, beginning in 2000 to the present. While Pew clearly states that it “bears no responsibility for interpretations presented or conclusions reached based on analysis” of the data they provide, one may use the data and reports to supplement one’s original research.

*University of Michigan: Civic Learning, Engagement, and Action Data Sharing (CivicLEADS)*

Civic Learning, Engagement, and Action Data Sharing (CivicLEADS) is a central repository where researchers working on civic education, civic action, and the intersection of those topics may access and share cross-disciplinary quantitative and qualitative data. CivicLEADS is part of the University of Michigan’s Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) Education and Child Care Data Archives, and is funded by grants from the Spencer Foundation. The repository includes datasets that have been added from individual researchers’ primary research data as well as datasets from other ICPSR archives. The site has two search engines, allowing one to explore topics by variable and/or by honing in on specific datasets. CivicLEADS's contains thousands of variables from studies with quantitative data described in statistical syntax, and also reports and links variables derived from the combination of other variables (indices, multi-variable measures, etc.) as well as root variables that have been used in the creation of such derived variables. Another important feature of CivicLEADS's is that it allows one to search the ICPSR Bibliography of Data-related Literature, which is a separate


\(^{32}\) Ibid.

database that contains citations of books, working papers, audiovisual materials, government and agency reports, journal articles, meeting presentations, dissertations, newspaper articles, unpublished manuscripts, newspaper articles and book chapters. The ICPSR Bibliography is continuously updated and, as of 2016, contained 70,000 citations.34

The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation: Data-Smart Solutions—Civic Engagement in Focus

Data-Smart City Solutions is a Knight Foundation funded initiative hosted by the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation that encourages local governments to reply upon data-driven projects in addressing issues regarding infrastructure, health and human services, public safety, civic data, and civic engagement. Project Director Stephen Goldsmith and Project Manager Katherine Hillenbrand, focus on research at the intersection of government and data, and see Data-Smart City Solutions as a resource that can help to bring together representatives from academia, government and private industry with the goal of highlighting best practices and innovative inter-agency preemptive solutions to civic problems. “Civic Engagement in Focus,” is a webpage where researchers can go to access information in the form of articles, data, links, and other resources from across the nation on topics pertaining to civic engagement. “More Inclusive Governance in the Digital Age,” “Social Media’s Place in Data-Smart Governance,” and “The Smart Chicago Collaborative: A New Model for Civic Innovation in Cities” are the titles of a few articles currently available.35

34 See “About the Bibliography of Data-related Literature,” http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/content/ICPSR/citations/methodology.html
35 See Data-Smart City Solutions, http://datasmart.ash.harvard.edu/civic-engagement