



Youth Civic Engagement: Systems Change and Culture Change in Hampton, Virginia

Carmen Sirianni
Brandeis University
sirianni@brandeis.edu

CIRCLE WORKING PAPER 31

APRIL 2005



CIRCLE

The Center for Information & Research
on Civic Learning & Engagement

Hampton is a city in the Hampton Roads area of the Virginia coast that includes the cities of Norfolk, Newport News, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, and Portsmouth. A mostly blue-collar city of 146,000 with a modest income base, Hampton has a youth population that is 52 percent African American and 40 percent white; the rest are mostly mixed race. In the early 1990s, civic and political leaders began a process of collaborative planning to make youth a central part of their reinventing government and economic development efforts. In the process, they began to shift fundamentally the way they viewed youth. From seeing young people as bundles of problems and deficits needing the latest professional intervention recipe, city leaders began to focus on them as resources and assets to be actively engaged in contributing to the life of the community. They committed the city to a vision of youth empowerment and, in the years since, have continued to broaden and deepen the city's strategy to build a "youth civic engagement system" seeking deep "culture change" in the way institutions value the civic contributions of young people.

The burgeoning literature on youth civic engagement points to many different ways in which youth can contribute to the democratic life of communities, institutions, and the larger polity: voting, advocacy, service learning, community-university partnerships, and youth organizing, to name just a few.¹ Hampton, however, represents a case where the city itself has taken responsibility to help institutionalize youth engagement. Several other cities have moved in this direction in recent years, most notably San Francisco with its youth commission, passed by referendum in 1995 with statutory powers of review for all policies affecting young people, and the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families' continuing efforts to include youth voice in its sponsored programs. The National League of Cities has helped diffuse such innovations and has raised the visibility of youth as vital assets to city leaders. While such models are relatively new, they have substantial promise for helping to create the democratic city of the 21st

century.

Indeed, parallel citywide systems for citizen participation show substantial robustness in comparison to many other forms of engagement. The landmark study by Jeffrey Berry, Kent Portney, and Ken Thomson, *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy*,² revealed the many advantages of citywide and city-sponsored systems that provided systematic access, training, resources, and decision-making power to neighborhood associations that had emerged in some cities during the 1970s and 1980s. Our own research, as well as that of others, has demonstrated that some of these municipal systems, and new ones following in their wake, have continued to innovate in the 1990s and 2000s with even more effective forms of participatory planning, neighborhood matching funds, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and community policing.³ Archon Fung's study of local school councils and community policing in Chicago in *Empowered Participation: Reinventing Urban Democracy*, shows that well-designed citywide systems that provide training for lay citizens and agency staff, appropriate rubrics for complex problem solving, and effective tools for monitoring, accountability, and improvement, can engage citizens in ways that avoid some of the endemic problems of participatory democracy.⁴

Hampton provides the most ambitious case to date to institutionalize youth civic engagement across the city in ways that have much in common with these other models. None, of course, is without its problems, and much needs to be done in the coming years to make these systems more robust. Together, however, they provide a map of possibilities for how the city -- and city government -- can be a dynamic generator of democratic public work, co-production, and problem solving.⁵

INNOVATING WITH YOUTH AND ADULT STAKEHOLDERS

The stage for innovation in Hampton was set in the mid-1980s by local reinventing government initiatives, themselves a response to serious problems of economic development and local revenues. Led by city manager Bob O'Neill, the city had begun to flatten its own hierarchy and devolve initiative downwards. It expanded employee participation, encouraged an entrepreneurial culture, and demanded collaboration across agencies. Hundreds of employees joined the city council in crafting a new vision and mission statement on the purpose and role of city government: to "bring together the resources of business, neighborhoods, community groups, and government" to make Hampton "the most livable city in Virginia." Government should not just be a provider of services and regulations, but should help broker resources from all sectors of the community.⁶

The process worked so well, says former assistant city manager Mike Montieth, who served on the original coalition for youth (see below), that the city decided to extend these principles to the community. The city's leaders, in fact, came to the realization that the old way of doing business simply expended too much adversarial energy. As Terry O'Neill, the city's current planning director and younger brother of Bob O'Neill, remembers it, someone asked the simple question at one of the meetings, "what about the old idea of citizens taking some responsibility?" Montieth consulted with community-problem solving specialist, William Potapchuk, but when the city council was unable to pay for his services, Montieth trained all the planners in the new methods himself. Collaborating with the community represented a "radical shift internally" for the planning department, though one

that "came up with the best plan ever" at a time when there was a great deal of contention over a proposed new road network cutting through the city.⁷

These developments were fundamental for bringing youth into the planning process down the road. According to Cindy Carlson, director of the Hampton Coalition for Youth, "if you can't value the voice of citizens generally, you won't value the voice of youth."⁸

In October 1990, the federal government provided another key ingredient for the reform process: a five-year, \$320,000 Community Partnership Grant from the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This grant was targeted to collaborative community planning for youth at risk. Carlson, then on staff at Alternatives, Inc., helped write the grant; she then directed the planning group, which was initially called the Families and Youth at Risk Initiating Committee and later became the Hampton Coalition for Youth. The grant did not require any programmatic work, though most other grantees around the country used it to do programs and some in Hampton fought fiercely for this as well.⁹

Alternatives, Inc., was a critical player in the reform process and remains so to this day. Founded in the early 1970s as a youth substance abuse prevention agency, Alternatives had become nationally recognized for its work. Its local political strategy, under the direction of its founding director, Richard Goll, had been one of cultivating long-term relationships to shape how power was utilized in the city. As Goll notes, "Our bottom line is 'relationships, relationships, relationships.'" While not community organizers as one finds today in the faith-based networks of IAF, PICO, and Gamaliel, the leaders of Alternatives had, in effect, done very intentional "relational organizing" for years, which positioned them to take advantage of the reinventing government efforts in the late 1980s. They thus had the legitimacy to convene a broad group of

stakeholders in the community to think differently about youth services.¹⁰

Alternatives, Inc., was also involved in national youth development networks that had begun to question the dominant frame of youth services in which young people were viewed as bundles of “deficits” in need “fixing” by outside professional and clinical intervention supported by separate silos of categorical funding (substance abuse, runaways, teenage pregnancy). William Lofquist, editor of the journal, *New Designs for Youth Development*, was particularly influential in helping Goll, Linda Hansen and other staff to recognize that youth had to be directly engaged, and that Alternatives had to become a “learning organization.” They formed a “learning team” within the agency, read selections from Peter Senge’s *The Fifth Discipline* and related works, and considered how they might have to reinvent their own agency. They also hired a group of 20 young people as “consultants” to develop a report and recommendations to the board; they would be “doing a job for the city of Hampton.” The youth group was very diverse and was identified through networks of guidance counselors and others. Although Alternatives felt it was “at the top of its game” as a substance abuse agency, these young people said that it was not really doing what young people needed. They didn’t want to be viewed as broken and in constant need of fixing. They wanted to be challenged and provided opportunities to make real contributions to the community. They viewed as most successful those programs of Alternatives that had involved them in problem solving, such as youth-to-youth programs.¹¹

Some staff at Alternatives had a very hard time not seeing themselves as “fixers.” But the board accepted virtually all of the recommendations proposed by the young people. To signal a radical departure, the agency officially closed its doors on June 30, 1992, and then re-opened the next day with those staff committed to work with youth in a fundamentally new way. From “treating” several hundred young people, Alternatives began “engaging” several thousand. It dropped the drug

treatment language, since young people and their parents felt stigmatized by it, and several years later Alternatives dropped the drug treatment program entirely, without any noticeable increase in substance abuse. (The agency maintains a partnership, however, with the Hampton-Newport News Community Services Board, which does provide substance abuse services.) As Richard Goll recalls, after the board accepted the youth recommendations and Alternatives reopened with a new mission, “we never looked back.” Similar to those innovative nonprofits and public agencies in *Sustaining Innovation*, by Brookings Institution senior fellow Paul Light, Alternatives utilized its organizational learning to move away from a “clientelized” view of the public to one that engages youth in doing public work themselves as “partners, coproducers, or stakeholders,... though citizen is not bad either.”¹²

The initial group of 20 adult planning committee members on the Coalition for Youth included representatives from civic organizations, nonprofits, and city agencies, including the superintendent of schools, the police chief who had pioneered community policing, and assistant city manager Montieth. Carlson challenged them to reach out broadly among their constituencies: “The answer to our questions does not lie only in this room.” Some resisted opening up the process further. However, Janice (Jay) Johnson was hired to coordinate a broad outreach strategy through five task forces (youth, parents, community groups, business, and youth workers and advocates). Facilitators within each group were provided considerable training to implement the strategy. Over 75 task force members volunteered to participate in the training and other task force activities. As many as 5,000 people sent in comments or participated in forums, luncheons, and house meetings. These activities were organized by constituency.

At the meetings, participants were asked to describe where the city was now and to articulate their vision for where they would like it to be in terms of relationships with youth and families.

They also generated many suggestions for how to get there. Each group could also request research it needed. Although not planned, one of the results of having each constituency meet separately was that it leveled the power of the groups to set the agenda.

In the late summer of 1992, the twenty adult planning committee members, forty additional adult stakeholders from the task forces and meetings, and the twenty youth that Alternatives had convened separately as the Youth Council, met in a two-day retreat. Participants broke up into small, mixed groups and generated recommendations for a specific topic that had emerged as a priority theme in the previous meetings, such as safety and diversity. Trained facilitators again led the groups. The result was a striking degree of consensus on principles of positive youth development. No one was simply arguing for more cops to reduce youth violence. Youth made a strong case that their voice was an essential part of any solutions. When the superintendent of schools came, literally, nose to nose with Marcus, a teenager whose dad was in jail for murder and who spoke only in rap -- to the great annoyance of almost everyone who dealt with him -- it was a transformative experience that convinced the superintendent at the time that he could build trusting relationships with empowered, even in-your-face young people.

A turning point was reached when stakeholder groups sitting at roundtables at the Raddison Hotel reported to the mayor and city councilors. They presented their suggestions. Young people were up on the riser. Parents did a skit. And no one bashed the city. There was a profound sense of collaborative work that many different groups needed to do. The meeting was a milestone in relations between citizens and city government.

The city council was surprised at the vision document the coalition presented them in its January 1993 report, 2 Commit 2 The Future/4 Youth. Mayor Jimmy Eason had

expected point-by-point proposals, but admitted that "the more I read it, the more I like it." And so Carlson suggested, "well, then I suggest you go home and read it a little bit more!"¹³

The report did contain 11 recommendations (Healthy Start and Healthy Families programs, Neighborhood Initiative), but it was first and foremost a vision and mission statement.

Our Mission: Hampton will create an environment in which youth contribute to the community in a manner that positively impacts the quality of life. We will empower our youth to meet their full potential.... To empower someone means to give them both authority and responsibility.

Partnership in the Community:
All young people in Hampton are entitled to be seen, heard, and respected as citizens of the community. They deserve to be prepared, active participants – based on their level of maturity – in community service, government, public policy, or other decision making which affects their lives and their well-being.¹⁴

Other cornerstones of the vision included the importance of families, a commitment to the whole child, an emphasis on strengths and assets brought by families and neighborhoods, respect for diversity of every kind, and lifelong learning in and out of school. Collaboration was highlighted as essential in an era when "no longer can we look to single programs and fragmented approaches to solve problems." The report insisted, however, that "strong public policy" could lead the way by outlining the kind of community to which all children are entitled. But over and over, the document returned to empowering youth as the most fundamental mission. To implement this, the report called for "a comprehensive system of

opportunities for youth to be involved in the life of the community.”¹⁵

A SYSTEM OF YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In building a system, Hampton’s innovators focused on several core principles. First, youth need a wide array of opportunities to contribute actively to the community, from the relatively simple and episodic, such as tutoring a younger child after school or cleaning up a river on the weekend, to the increasingly complex, which might involve long-term planning, policy development, and problem-solving in partnership with other youth and adults. The simple tasks can elicit contributions from virtually everyone; they serve as a very democratic entry portal to community engagement and the development of a civic ethic. The more complex tasks can be intentionally designed as “pathways” to develop progressively higher civic skill sets needed to carry out more ambitious projects and to represent the interests of large numbers of youth, whether in a neighborhood, high school, or in the city as a whole (see Figure 1). Second, developing civic leadership skills among youth requires the city to make serious investment in training and mentoring by adult professionals. The city should not simply create opportunities for engagement. It should provide the kind of training that makes it more likely that young people will succeed when they take on challenging civic roles. By investing in training, the city enables youth to add genuine public value today (safer neighborhoods and schools, better city planning), as well as to provide an expanded pool of dynamic civic and political leaders for tomorrow’s Hampton. Third, productive youth engagement in city affairs is not just a task for young people. It is an ongoing challenge for the adults who run and staff municipal agencies. Effective engagement requires significant “culture change” within agencies so that adult staff come to view young people as potential resources and partners, rather than as passive clients to be served or problems to be controlled. Such culture change will also involve a significant investment in training.¹⁶

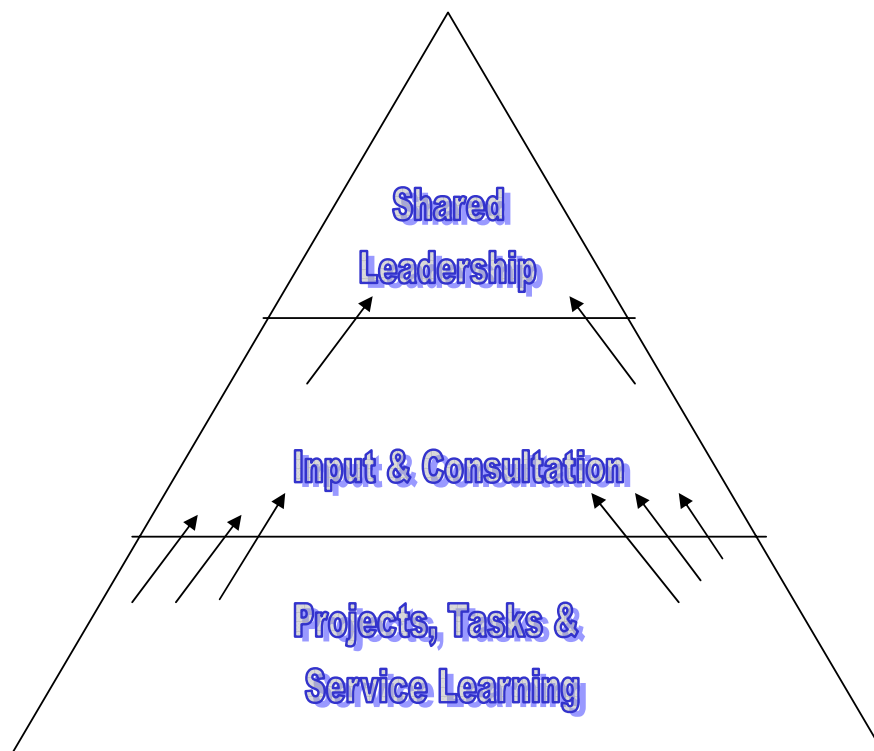
Figure 1

Figure 1: Pathways to Civic Engagement for Youth in Hampton, Virginia (source: Cindy Carlson, "The Hampton Experience: Creating a Model and a Context for Youth Civic Engagement," *Journal of Community Practice*, forthcoming).

Several of the most important components of the youth engagement system in Hampton are the youth commission, youth planners, school superintendent's youth advisory group, and principal's advisory group in each of the city's four public high schools.

YOUTH COMMISSION.

The Hampton Youth Commission, composed of 24 students from four public and three private high schools serving the city, was established in 1997 on the recommendation of teenagers Patrick Johnson and Sheena Patrick, who had been hired by the city to work as part-time city planners.¹⁷ In many ways, however, the youth commission is an outgrowth of the task force of 20 youth that had helped guide the collaborative planning process several years earlier. A Mayor's Youth Council dating back to the 1970s was viewed by youth as not being effective or powerful enough. The term "commission" was chosen to parallel other official commissions in the city, and it was given authority to report directly to the city council. Commissioners serve two-year terms and are recruited through broad outreach to schools, community centers, youth organizations, and public meetings. Students apply and are selected by existing commissioners and adult training partners who have mentored them in various other leadership capacities, such as the principals' or superintendent's advisory groups, or other neighborhood and faith-based groups, with increasing avenues from middle-school leadership programs as well. This ensures structured pathways of leadership development based on experience, trust, and performance.

During the school year, the commission meets twice per month, once in a work session and once in a large public forum convened in city council chambers, where they sit in the councilors seats to conduct business. Twice annually, the youth commission presents formally to the city council, which is televised, and to the planning commission. Commissioners commit to active outreach to involve a broad range of young people in commission deliberations, and efforts extend to school groups, friendship networks, and teachers (especially to offer extra credit). An outreach video and website help in recruitment and publicity. The youth commission has published a detailed manual on how to start and improve youth commissions and advisory groups to empower young people. As the manual notes, the

youth commission is intended "to be more than a specialized opportunity for an elite group of youth."¹⁸

The city council allocates a budget that covers ongoing training, a student secretary, small stipends (\$5) for meeting attendance, and a fund for youth/adult partnership projects that are awarded by the commission in an open competition, a practice now widely referred to as "youth philanthropy."¹⁹ Newly selected commissioners receive training by Alternatives and more experienced youth leaders during the summer prior to assuming their positions. In addition, the Coalition for Youth, under whose jurisdiction the youth commission falls, helps with coordination and logistics. Other adults serve (with the two youth planners) as a "staff team," including the director of the Coalition for Youth, the planning director, a senior city planner who works with the youth planners, and Allyson Gaul, the director of the Youth Civic Engagement Center at Alternatives. Other adults from parks and recreation, school division, neighborhood office, and Alternatives are involved in the informal support network. Gaul, who oversees training for the youth commission and high school training overall, notes that Hampton utilizes a philosophy of relationship building and close mentoring and coaching of youth commissioners, with continual feedback to enable them to refine their leadership skills. As she notes, "We help them through a process of personal-level learning. But we don't directly worry about their personal development. We tell them: 'You have a job to do, a public role.' And they generally step up to the task." Kathryn Price, a 17-year old youth planner at the time of our discussions, also stressed the importance of training: "We have a lot to share, but we don't want to be set up for failure." Tamara Whitaker, a 17-year old youth commissioner and member of the school superintendent's youth advisory board, concurred, adding: "Relationship building is essential... people keep coming back because of the relationships."²⁰

When the commission meets in open session on an important issue, the city

council chambers are often packed to capacity. In September 2002, for example, 240 people convened to discuss "the rights of youth," with five lawyers volunteering to help clarify legal issues. In March 2004, the commission hosted a candidates' forum for the city council and mayoral election to another packed chamber, using a Jeopardy-style game-show format that other civic groups then borrowed for their own election forums. The youth commission typically combines general discussion with lively breakout sessions. The breakouts engage in serious, often very nuanced deliberation that is facilitated by commissioners in a very professional manner. Indeed, in observing these and other meetings with the school superintendent, high school principals, and other community partners, one is struck immediately with the poise and skill that youth display as they lead large and small group discussions, brainstorm ideas on flip charts, develop strategies, consult with authorities, plan outreach to parents, teachers, and other youth, and hold each other accountable for the work commitments they make to see a project through to completion.

In a youth commission meeting in May 2002 to develop joint strategies with the Citizens Unity Commission (CUC) on supporting diversity in Hampton, for instance, Kathryn Price, then a high-school senior, coordinated breakout sessions with perfect poise among 157 youth present, whose racial composition roughly matched that of the city's youth as a whole. The breakout groups, led by commissioners, deliberated quite thoughtfully on some difficult issues in the schools: teachers and adults not being sensitive to changing norms on race, the need for students to have a say in teacher hiring, the use of principals' advisory groups to report on negative racial dynamics in classes, the merits of neighborhood schools over racial redistricting, the possible benefits and drawbacks of mandating racial sensitivity workshops. Each group came up with a priority ranking of action items from lists that had been generated at an earlier citywide youth summit. Despite the seriousness of the comments, there was a spirit of ease, laughter, and spontaneous

high-fives among black and white students in the break-out groups and little sign of stereotypical positions based on race. The CUC, composed of 20 citizens appointed for four-year terms, including six high school students, had sponsored the youth summit the previous year. It looks to new African American leadership in the youth culture to help move Hampton along at a much faster pace on racial issues. The youth commission then worked with the CUC in planning "Hampton Unite," which was facilitated by the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC), a nationally known center with much experience in community dialogue on race and other issues. Following that work, the youth chose to proceed with their own model of study circles combined with other education and action projects. They helped establish a "diversity college," and have trained 10 young people to serve as trainers and "diversity champions" throughout the city. Ninth and tenth graders, for instance, have developed a 5-session curriculum for after-school workers to use among sixth graders; other youth serve as co-trainers with adults to develop more productive ways for generations with widely diverse cultural experiences to collaborate in the workplace.²¹

YOUTH PLANNERS

The planning department hired two youth planners beginning in 1996 after Terry O'Neill, the director of planning, had an eye-opening experience facilitating a neighborhood dialogue. "A light bulb came on for me. The room was filled with thirty-somethings and retirees. Where were the young people?" So he decided to convene another dialogue with youth. "Quite frankly, they participated at a better level than the adults. ... So I called Cindy [Carlson] and Rich [Goll] to do more." Youth planners now work 15 hours per week, and serve two-year staggered terms. Some, however, work voluntarily beyond this because the work is so interesting and their role so significant. We know of at least one mother who pleaded with city staff to get her daughter to limit her hours to spend more time on her homework; her daughter found ways to sabotage this nonetheless (and still got accepted to

prestigious Ivy League and state universities).²²

The planning office provides mentoring and technical assistance for conducting statistically valid surveys and utilizing computer-assisted planning tools, though the young people often learn the latter much faster than the adults, according to O'Neill. Professional staff have taken youth planners to study transportation layout in other cities to help them determine options for their own bikeways system and for bus routes that serve the needs of young people. Youth planners do extensive field observation on the use of space. As staff of the youth commission, they facilitate meetings throughout the city to get ideas from young people, and then use these to develop specific proposals for the comprehensive plan. Six youth planners worked on the Youth Component of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan over the three years of its preparation, along with other planners on the subcommittee. This was formally submitted in 1999. The current draft of the Hampton Community Plan, combining comprehensive land-use and social planning, contains a set of youth recommendations and measures of progress developed by the youth planners and a youth focus group, collaborating with adult partners. These include access to developmental assets, greater neighborhood safety, decrease in destructive activities, better career preparation, more employment opportunities, higher median youth income, more public spaces dedicated to youth, affordable and accessible public transportation, and – last but not least – full youth participation in decisions affecting them in a greater range of organizations and institutions. On the basis of a survey of 150 businesses, public programs, and youth service organizations, the youth commission and planners have also developed a guide book and official stickers that certify spaces as “youth friendly;” those not making the grade are offered assistance on how to improve in order to attract more young people.²³

The youth of Hampton are soon to see one of their bigger planning ideas come to fruition: a centrally located teen center co-designed by young people working with professionals.

Youth who participated in the original planning process expressed a strong desire for youth-driven programming and a mixture of activities, including sports, dancing, computers, clinics, media center, arts, arcade, meeting rooms, and a recording studio. The center should also provide a strong sense of membership and ownership by teens and should have youth participation in governance of the space itself. Youth recognized the need for a safe space with supervision by adults, such as non-uniformed security personnel, but in a way that is not intrusive and does not entail adult dictation. The city council approved the center as part of its capital budget, but when a private health center became available for purchase, the youth commission had to compromise on some of its original goals, such as location. Nonetheless, the commission's teen center committee is working with the youth planners to help design the interior space, which turned out to be larger than initially planned. The center is scheduled to open in early 2007.

According to O'Neill, youth planning has been very successful and has enabled a whole series of policy changes that the planning office and adults acting alone would otherwise never have come up with. Youth planning has also given young people a sense of ownership, but of the kind that comes with the responsibility to learn how to navigate, negotiate, and consider the interests of others that might be affected (e.g. bus commuters who might fear increased youth ridership). O'Neill says he could easily employ four times the number of youth planners, were it not for budgetary restrictions, and would thus be able to move things forward at a much faster pace.²⁴

Youth planners in Hampton received a Virginia Planning Award from the American Planning Association's Virginia chapter, and honorable mention for the youth component in the 2010 plan, where it was competing against adult professional planners as well.

PRINCIPALS' AND SUPERINTENDENT'S ADVISORY GROUPS

Each public high school in the city has a principal's advisory group; a superintendent's advisory group represents students from all four high schools. Some schools have more ambitious projects and more extensive participation than others, of course, but most deal with a range of issues such as peer mediation training, youth-to-youth mentoring, school safety, and inclusion of students who feel left out due to teasing and bullying. The advisory groups plan events such as student-teacher breakfasts. Some tackle academic improvement issues. They meet with the principal on a regular basis and run the meetings themselves, though with training by Alternatives staff. Like the youth commission meetings, they plan and brainstorm in a very deliberative fashion and have rigorous standards of accountability for follow-through on commitments. Some issues also get referred to the Parent, Teacher, and Student Association (PTSA), in which students are members.

At Kecoughtan High School, for instance, the advisory group meets weekly; 60-100 students are also active on various subcommittees, and several teachers now participate as partners as well. Principal Arnold Baker has become a real believer in "youth as resources" at a very deep level. He began with a dialogue group when he was a sixth-grade teacher, and then developed an advisory group when he became a middle-school principal. As principal of Kecoughtan, he initially utilized this dialogue and gripe session model; but when the city received some grant money to train youth, he says, "we shifted to partnerships ... we became project oriented in order to improve the school." As a result, the number of students involved increased substantially. The Safe Schools subcommittee works on keeping the school violence-free, and conducts a safety survey and focus groups each year. Together with the principal and a core group of supportive teachers, students developed a Safe Schools Handbook that has become a model for the city. When there was a fight at a dance, Baker challenged them to own the

problem and come up with their own plan before he would schedule another one. They studied the problem and proposed a new set of rules (no tickets sales at the door, required dressing up, 10 chaperons and 2 police officers present); there has never been another fight. The Recognition subcommittee focuses on ways to ensure that all students feel included, and not just those involved in the most popular activities and cliques. Students are involved in various ways (orientation, freshman survival guide) in making the transition for 9th graders as smooth as possible. They also participate in interviewing new staff, including teachers guidance counselors, and coaches; they organize a tour of the school for candidates. In one instance, students strongly supported one candidate for guidance counselor over another, who was favored by adults on the hiring committee. The principal ultimately accepted the students' rationale and hired their preferred choice. When confronted with what Baker admits are the "terrible physical facilities" in Hampton schools, students at Kecoughtan organized a group of youth and adults to paint the interior of the school themselves. When students recognized the academic disservice, indeed injustice, often done to school athletes and then recommended a 2.0 GPA minimum for students to play on teams, they mobilized their own assets to help tutor and mentor them. Not one athlete has subsequently been disqualified from playing.

The Improving School Achievement committee at Kecoughtan High initiated a project in 2002 on how to make classrooms more stimulating. Students interviewed teachers they respected, and then classified their practices and attitudes into eight categories, such as teacher ability to build relationships, manage the classroom, create high expectations, manage time, and engage students as resources in learning. The committee then published an Idea Book filled with innovative learning techniques, pictures, slogans, and small tips to help all teachers create a caring and learning environment. They distributed it to all teachers. Baker agreed to use the booklet in teacher orientation at the beginning of the school

year and to have youth serve as co-facilitators of training. Three Kecoughtan students recently participated in governor Mark Warner's forum on high school reform. The school thus not only deeply respects the everyday practical knowledge of students as a democratic resource, but also utilizes it to inform the professional practice of teachers.²⁵

The Superintendent's Advisory Group includes representatives from all the public high schools. It is co-facilitated by student leaders and Alternatives. Some two-dozen students generally attend the evening meeting every month, along with the superintendent and the director of secondary education. Meetings begin with community building, such as a circular rhythm-sticks exercise that involves everyone in tapping complex rhythms with those around them. Discussion then turns to serious matter of district policy. School officials display no sign of "professionals know best," but listen carefully and work collaboratively toward mutually acceptable solutions in an atmosphere that is at once thoughtfully deliberative and playfully energizing. During a meeting on state standards of learning and early school-day release in senior year, for instance, students discuss course sequences, SATs and PSATs, practical training and apprenticeships. They offer very thoughtful suggestions based on detailed knowledge, and almost every student participates in the general discussion. They speak confidently and deliberatively, and with sensitivity to students aiming to go to four-year colleges, as well as those likely headed for community colleges, the armed services, or apprenticeships (e.g. auto mechanics). The discussion is student-driven throughout, though the superintendent and secondary schools director make a formal report on a student survey and provide critical insight into state mandates. Tammy Whitaker, a senior, facilitates the general meeting and other students convene breakout groups, which develop very detailed suggestions for a broad student and parent outreach strategy.

The advisory group has continued to function through the tenure of several superintendents and has convinced even those not initially enthusiastic that students had a great deal to contribute. As Dr. Allen Davis III, who retired in 2004, told us, students have made vital contributions not only at advisory board meetings, but also at the city board of education, city council, and state board of education meetings. As he noted, "I am an equal at these [advisory group] meetings and they treat me as such.... If I were to run into a roadblock on any of their recommendations, I would bring it back to them. But so far I haven't turned any down."²⁶ Patrick Russo, the new superintendent, has continued to work with the advisory group and has championed student representation on the school board.

The Virginia standards of learning initially put a damper on the ambitions for service learning expressed in the original 1993 report to the city council. However, with a Youth Innovation Fund grant from the Kellogg Foundation, Hampton has begun developing an eighth-grade civics and service-learning course to be piloted in 6-8 classrooms in 2005-06, with expected universal roll out the following year. Alternatives, Inc., also offers a three-semester course enrolling students from all four high schools. The first semester, organized during the summer, focuses on personal leadership and functions as a "learning community" of 25-30 individuals. In the second semester, offered in the fall, students do their work through distance learning and periodic group meetings. The third semester in the spring requires field placement in a leadership position in a community or school group or city agency.²⁷

While the youth civic engagement system in Hampton is premised on building partnerships among youth and adults, young people have also begun to organize an independent citywide "youth coalition." The trigger for this occurred in 2004 when the interim superintendent, now gone, placed the Alternatives contract for leadership development in the schools on the

budgetary chopping block. Youth mobilized as they had never done before and got the funding restored.²⁸

TRANSFORMING AGENCY CULTURE

A core principle of Hampton's approach, as noted earlier, is that youth civic engagement can realize its potential only if there is corresponding culture change in institutions, including administrative agencies of city government. Youth being involved, volunteering, and having a voice are not enough; adults must change their behavior at a deeper level. Administrators and professionals must encourage productive public work by young people. They must share expert knowledge, recognize youth as resources for problem solving, value their special insights. They must accommodate the daily rhythms and pressures of young people's lives, provide developmentally appropriate tasks, and offer public challenges of consequence to the life of the city, not just to youth as an interest group. Institutional culture change such as this takes many years. It goes against the grain of the way most professionals and administrators have been trained -- and how they are evaluated and rewarded. It requires continuous relationship building and mutual accountability at many levels.²⁹

The Hampton Coalition for Youth, which became an office of city government after the 1993 report, plays the key role in a coordinated, citywide strategy of institutional culture change. As former assistant city manager, Mike Montieth, explains, the coalition's role is to "catalyze best practices" and "establish a learning community throughout city government, not to run programs."³⁰ The coalition serves as a clearinghouse for youth development and capacity building practices for agencies and other organizations. It coordinates the city's "youth as resources" and "developmental assets" strategy. Its budget (approximately \$400,000) funds a small staff, as well as contracts for training and facilitation services by Alternatives (beyond its contract with the school system). The coalition also

helps raise money from national foundations to help the city continue to innovate, as in the Kellogg Foundation's Youth Innovation Fund now funding projects in eight cities, including Hampton.

Cindy Carlson, the director of the coalition since its inception, plays a pivotal role in the entire system. She has built long-term relationships with many key players in city government, community groups, non-profit agencies, and the schools, where she once coordinated substance abuse prevention and intervention services as staff for Alternatives. Carlson oversees the Youth Commission and has close mentoring relationships with a good number of youth leaders. In effect, she has functioned as a relational organizer among youth and adults within city government and in the community. Two other full-time staff work on the developmental assets strategy, broad outreach, and the youth commission. Carlson reports directly to the city manager and mayor.

The planning department and school system, as we have seen, have made considerable efforts, under the guidance of their top leaders, to make youth engagement central to how they conduct their business. The public works department engages youth in its Hampton Watershed Restoration Project and various Adopt-A-Stream clean-ups and storm-drain marking efforts, within the larger Chesapeake Bay Program of EPA and the states. The Neighborhood Office has also been energetic in involving youth. A product of the same collaborative planning that led to the creation of the Coalition for Youth as a city agency, the Neighborhood Office and local volunteers set about helping neighborhood associations in the 56 neighborhoods consolidate around 10 planning districts. It also lent assistance to strengthen and build associations in neighborhoods where they were underdeveloped. Joan Kennedy, former director of planning, who others remember as having made the original comment back in the late 1980s about "citizens taking responsibility," has been the director of the office since its creation, and has worked directly with Montieth and

Carlson on overall design. The office operates on principles of assets-based community development and provides small matching grants and larger neighborhood improvement funds for local projects. It also sponsors a "neighborhood college" to develop leadership skills. A Neighborhood Commission includes representatives from all 10 districts, along with representatives from faith and school communities, other institutions, youth, and city government. Youth and adults now learn to work together on neighborhood projects through a "neighborhood/youth college," and young people serve on a citywide Neighborhood Youth Advisory Board.³¹

The Parks and Recreation department has two youth on its 9-person advisory board and a director, Laurine Press, who has been deeply committed to youth participation for many years. She believes that the more voice young people have, the more they will utilize the facilities and programs. "They are my customers, just as if they were adult customers."³² But they are not just customers; they are also "citizens" who have the responsibility to engage directly in constructive dialogue and problem solving with local residents who may fear a skateboard park in their neighborhood or who are upset at late night basketball or profanity on the court in the presence of young children. To develop the ethos and skill at the street level for youth participation and co-ownership, Press provides her staff with 3-day trainings through Alternatives. She has also been energetic in getting her staff to participate in the B.E.S.T. (Building Exemplary Systems of Training for Youth Workers) Initiative, which is a national training program to upgrade the professional skills of youth workers, including their capacities to facilitate youth participation. (Hampton is one of 15 cities to participate in B.E.S.T, which is coordinated locally by Alternatives.) Youth on the Parks and Recreation advisory board have provided input to ensure that more recreation suits the needs of young people. But they are instructed by Press that they are on the board to represent the needs of the entire community, not just youth. And they are challenged to imagine the kinds of recreation

they would like to see for their children when they become parents. They do not approve of programs just because they are directed at youth, and can be very rigorous in evaluating, and sometimes rejecting, proposals for youth recreation.³³

The Police Department has also included youth as part of its larger community policing strategy. A School Resource Officer Program places officers in schools, where they build relationships and trust, provide mentoring, and teach law modules in classes. The department sponsors a Citizens Police Academy twice a year, as well as a Youth Citizens Police Academy that meets for two weeks over the summer. Several neighborhoods previously targeted for youth community-oriented policing (Y-COPE) reduced juvenile crime by half and received the Governor's Excellence in Safety Award. Youth and police have also co-written a curriculum for the police academy that embodies the principles and practices of "youth as resources" and "police as servants of youth," which aims to move beyond programs to deeper culture change.

As youth engagement becomes increasingly common in other settings, it also invariably seeps into the culture of agencies through family networks. The eldest daughter of (now retired) police Major Nolan Cutler, for instance, was one of the 20 young people who helped develop the original strategy for youth engagement in the city in 1990. Another daughter had been active in an anti-drug campaign. In 2002, his son was serving on the school superintendent's advisory group. His own kids helped turn him into a true believer that engaged young people are a fundamental asset to the city.³⁴

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In the eyes of its key innovators, Hampton still has a long way to go to realize its full potential as a city that engages young people. Its larger service learning and civic education initiatives in schools are just getting off the ground. It has developed no serious university-community partnerships that engage college students in

the civic life of the city. Various agencies within government and the social services do not recognize youth as assets; in those that do, there is still much work to be done to change street-level practice. Because of budget cuts, youth community policing in neighborhoods has had to be cut back. Some schools do a much better job than others in involving students in collaborative problem solving; and some teachers resist what they see as an encroachment on their power and prerogatives. Some neighborhood associations have not made serious attempts to include youth. Hampton is not an economically thriving or rich city, by any standard, and budget constraints in the early 2000s have continually threatened to erode funding for key programs and training. In addition, there are no comparative, quantitative or longitudinal data on how much the initiatives in Hampton have impacted civic attitudes, skills, or learning.

Of course, American colonists in Virginia and elsewhere made a revolution in self-governance without such data. While this comparison may appear forced – and is certainly not intended as an argument against rigorous evaluation – it highlights the texture of justification that one finds in so many quarters of the city. Youth civic engagement is a basic right and a fundamental resource for a dynamic and democratic city. The old way of doing things was simply not working in the eyes of a pragmatic, democratic citizenry who had organized into committees of collaborative correspondence and visioning – under the rather prosaic rubric of a “planning grant.” Young people have stepped up to the plate in so many venues over the past decade and have made contributions broadly recognized by elected and appointed officials and other adult partners in neighborhoods and institutions of various sorts. Though resources may be tight to achieve all that is desired, the political culture of the city has changed enough to make a significant reversal in the youth civic engagement system an unlikely possibility. Indeed, new components of the system are being regularly added.

If I had to pick a just few lessons and recommendations that derive from the Hampton

experience, as well as other youth commissions and citywide systems of citizen participation, I would stress the following:

- *Develop a robust infrastructure.* Whether it be a coalition for youth (as in Hampton), a department of neighborhoods (as in Seattle, Portland and other cities), a community policing implementation office (as in Chicago) -- or, ideally, various and complementary combinations -- it is important to invest in agency infrastructure that can catalyze and evaluate best practices, provide funding to local groups, build relationships across city agencies and various other nonprofit and business actors, and hold various partners accountable for performance. Having a youth commission or similar institution with minimal staff might help establish a beachhead for further transformation, but it will provide little capacity to transform institutional practices in a deep and lasting way. Participation that does not progressively change institutional practices and cultures will not fundamentally empower youth.
- *Provide training for citizens and agency staff.* Because cities require complex and multi-stakeholder (including multi-agency) problem solving on so many fronts (land-use planning, public safety, transportation, schooling, environment, recreation, human services), and because they face serious problems of legitimacy unless they engage a great diversity of citizens in meaningful and inclusive ways, they need to invest in providing civic skills to both ordinary citizens and agency staff alike. Hampton, probably more than any other city relative to its size, has invested in training youth to deliberate carefully, facilitate problem solving, map community assets, build relationships and partnerships, plan major projects, and learn progressively more challenging leadership skills through intentionally structured pathways. It has also invested in training adult staff to learn how to work effectively with empowered young people. Chicago has invested in training thousands of residents, beat officers, sergeants, and even some staff of other city agencies to be able to collaborate in problem solving and thenm

co-production of public safety, because its core vision recognizes that "Safe Neighborhoods Are Everybody's Business." Seattle provides training to neighborhood activists and organizations in order to enable them to utilize assets-based community development strategies, participatory land-use planning, sustainability indicators, and dispute resolution techniques; core neighborhood and professional agency staff have also been trained to broker civic relationships and share professional knowledge in ways that empower ordinary people. Training can be provided in-house (as in Seattle's department of neighborhoods), through contracts (as with Hampton's Alternatives, Inc.), or through some serial or simultaneous combination (as in Chicago's community policing and many other city-sponsored programs). Conflicts can arise over how this is done (as in Chicago), and generally on how city-sponsored systems for participation relate to independent civic organizations, but these can generally be managed in ways that provide citizens with many of the benefits of both.

- *Develop appropriate federal policy designs.* Without a federal grant to do collaborative planning, it is unlikely that Hampton would have been able to innovate so ambitiously and with such broad public legitimacy. Chicago's leaders had various incentives to innovate with community policing, but federal dollars were critical to developing such an effective outreach and training program, as well as evaluation and improvement strategy. Other cities that developed robust participatory neighborhood association and planning systems, such as Portland and St. Paul, did so in response to federal mandates and models, such as Community Action and Model Cities. Yet the 1960s programs, despite some important legacies of "maximum feasible participation," had serious flaws, and more recent programs have not been designed to effectively support citizen participation. Hampton and Chicago were more exceptions than the rule in the use of their respective federal grants. While it is important for cities to commit their own resources to help train and build infrastructure (and, of course, to seek private foundation and other partners), many cities are not

well situated in terms of local resources and/or do not have political cultures that are as conducive to civic innovation that is genuinely empowering. In order to promote innovations, such as Hampton's youth civic engagement system, on a much more extensive basis, we should explore federal policy designs that provide incentives for city governments to innovate. While making the case for such federal investments in democracy will be an uphill and long-term struggle, we have moved beyond some of the major conundrums faced by federal policymakers in the 1960s in their efforts to promote greater participatory democracy in cities. In addition, we have far more robust collaborative models and methods -- not to mention a far greater array of well-tested intermediary organizations for training and facilitation -- to enable city officials to utilize participation to solve real problems without generating undue conflict, demand overload, political risk, and delegitimation. In developing policy designs at the federal level, we will also have to pay particular attention to how to extend the scope of innovative models from the city to the metropolitan and regional levels, because so many key issues of planning, equity, economic development, and environment are regional in scope, and because, in the words of Princeton political scientist Eric Oliver, we cannot afford to have suburbanites free to act as "civic parasites" who enjoy the benefits of the larger metropolitan area "without sharing responsibility for its social and political maintenance...."³⁵ But this is a story for another time.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ For an overview, see Carmen Sirianni and Lewis A. Friedland, *The Civic Renewal Movement: Community Building and Democracy in the United States* (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation Press, 2005), parts 1 and 4; Merita Irby, Thaddeus Ferber, and Karen Pittman, with Joel Tolman and Nicole Yohalem, *Youth Action: Youth Contributing to Communities, Communities Supporting Youth*. Community and Youth Development Series, volume 6 (Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment, International Youth Foundation, 2001); Cynthai Gibson and Peter Levine, *The Civic Mission of Schools* (New York, NY and College Park, MD: Carnegie Corporation and CIRCLE: The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2003); Heather Lewis-Charp, Hanh Cao Yu, Sengsouvanh Soukamneuth, and Johanna Laco of Social Policy Research Associates, *Extending the Reach of Youth Development Through Activism: Research Results from the Youth Leadership for Development Initiative*. 2 volumes (Takoma Park, MD: Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, 2003).
- ² Jeffrey Berry, Kent Portney, and Ken Thomson, *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1993).
- ³ See Carmen Sirianni and Lewis A. Friedland, *Civic Innovation in America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), chapter 2; Jim Diers, *Neighbor Power: Building Community the Seattle Way* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2004); Wesley G. Skogan and Susan Hartnett, *Community Policing, Chicago Style* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Wesley G. Skogan, Susan M. Hartnett, Jill DuBois, Jennifer T. Comey, Marianne Kaiser, and Justine H. Lovig, *On The Beat: Police and Community Problem Solving* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999); Steven Reed Johnson, *Civic Portland: Transformation and Renewal in an American City, 1960-1999* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, forthcoming).
- ⁴ Archon Fung, *Empowered Participation: Reinventing Urban Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).
- ⁵ On the concept of public work, see Harry Boyte, *Everyday Politics* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).
- ⁶ See David Osborne and Peter Plastrik, *Beyond Bureaucracy: Five Strategies for Reinventing Government* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997), especially chapter 8, "The Culture Strategy."
- ⁷ Personal interviews with Mike Montieth, former assistant city manager, City of Hampton, April 24, 2002; and Terry O'Neill, director of planning, City of Hampton, April 24, 2002.
- ⁸ Cindy Carlson, director of the Hampton Coalition for Youth, Hampton, VA, April 23, 2002, in our discussion with Mike Montieth.
- ⁹ Personal interviews with Cindy Carlson, director of the Hampton Coalition for Youth, and Richard Goll, founding director of Alternatives, Inc., Hampton, VA, April 22, 2002. To demonstrate their commitment to planning for systems change, the Coalition for Youth returned \$100,000 earmarked by the city council to support the planning process (which had begun already in early 1990) should the CSAP grant not come through, rather than use it to fund extra services. Even though Carlson and Goll had been supporters of

efforts to expand childcare programs in the city, they resisted the demand by the head of the department of social services to use it for this. According to Goll, “had we said yes to that request, we would not be sitting at this table today talking about youth civic engagement in the city of Hampton.... And we would never have gotten the public support needed to fund many of the [early childhood] programs we have today.”

- ¹⁰ Personal interviews with Richard Goll, April 22, 2002; presentation by Richard Goll, Rosemont, IL, October 8, 2002. On relational organizing in the faith-based networks, such as the Industrial Areas Foundation and PICO, see Mark R. Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling: Community Building to Revitalize American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); and Richard L. Wood, 2002. *Faith in Action: Religion, Race, and Democratic Organizing in America*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
- ¹¹ Personal and telephone interviews and small group discussions with Richard Goll, January 9, April 22, and April 24, 2002; Kathryn Johnson, director of Alternatives, January 31 and April 22, 2002; Linda Hansen, director of Creativity Center at Alternatives; Sean O’Keefe and Christie Burgos O’Keefe, April 24, 2002, who were youth involved in the early efforts and subsequently served on the staff of Alternatives. Della Hughes, former director of the National Network for Youth, which has some 800 local youth agencies as organizational members, attests to a parallel national process of rethinking youth services in the early 1990s that was catalyzed by the “community youth development guide team,” which included Bill Lofquist and others. Personal interviews with Della Hughes, Waltham, MA, March 21 and May 8, 2001. See also Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1990). The website of Alternatives, Inc., is: www.altinc.org.
- ¹² Paul C. Light, *Sustaining Innovation: Creating Nonprofit and Government Organizations That Innovate Naturally* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 34ff, 93. Personal interview with Richard Goll, April 24, 2002.
- ¹³ Personal interviews with Cindy Carlson, Hampton, VA, April 22, 2002; Hampton Coalition for Youth, *2 Commit 2 the Future/4 Youth: Proposed Plan of Action* (Hampton, VA: Hampton Coalition for Youth, 1993).
- ¹⁴ Hampton Coalition for Youth, *2 Commit 2 the Future/4 Youth*, pages i, 2, 6.
- ¹⁵ Hampton Coalition for Youth, *2 Commit 2 the Future/4 Youth*, p. iii, italics in original.
- ¹⁶ See Cindy Carlson, “The Hampton Experience: Creating a Model and a Context for Youth Civic Engagement,” *Journal of Community Practice* (forthcoming); Hampton Coalition for Youth, *2 Commit 2 the Future/4 Youth*, 16-17. On designing “pathways” for youth engagement that are diverse and developmentally appropriate, see Irby, Ferber, and Pittman, *Youth Action*.
- ¹⁷ Two of the private high schools are located in neighboring Newport News.
- ¹⁸ Cindy Carlson and Elizabeth Sykes, *Shaping the Future: Working Together, Changing Communities. A Manual on How to Start or Improve Your Own Youth Commission* (Hampton, VA: Hampton Coalition for Youth, 2001). Sykes co-authored the manual while a youth commissioner. See also Hampton Youth Commission, *Shaping the Future: The Hampton Youth Commission*. Videotape (Hampton, VA: Hampton Coalition for Youth, 2000). The website of the Hampton Youth Commission is: www.hampton.gov/youth.

- ¹⁹ In 2002, the commission's budget for such projects was \$45,000. On the increasing practice of "youth philanthropy," in which young people themselves determine projects to fund, see Pam Garza and Pam Stevens, *Best Practices in Youth Philanthropy* (Austin, TX: Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth, 2002); and Youth Leadership Institute, *Changing the Face of Giving: An Assessment of Youth Philanthropy* (San Francisco, CA: James Irvine Foundation, 2001). On youth/adult partnerships, see Shepherd Zeldin, Annette Kusgen McDaniel, Dmitri Topitzes, and Matt Calvert, *Youth in Decision Making: A Study on the Impacts of Youth on Adults and Organizations* (Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council/Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, 2000).
- ²⁰ Telephone interview with Allyson Graul, director, Youth Civic Engagement Center, Alternatives, Inc., August 2, 2002. Presentations and discussion by Kathryn Price and Tamara Whitaker, at our national strategy conference, "Youth Development and Civic Engagement: Leveraging Innovation, Building a Movement," Boston, February 1-3, 2002.
- ²¹ Field notes, Hampton Youth Commission meeting, April 22, 2002; personal interview with John Johnson, director of the Citizens Unity Commission, Hampton, Virginia, April 24, 2002; telephone interviews with Cindy Carlson, February 7, 2005; Allyson Graul, March 9, 2005; Study Circles Resource Center staff retreat, Pomfret, CT, November 9, 2004. See also William Potapchuk, Cindy Carlson, and Joan Kennedy, "Growing Governance Deliberatively: Lessons and Inspiration from Hampton," in John Gastil and Peter Levine, eds., *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005); Study Circles Resource Center, *A Community for All Generations: Teens and Adults Working Together* (Pomfret, CT: SCRC, 2002); *Facing the Challenge of Race and Race Relations: Democratic Dialogue and Action for Stronger Communities*. Third edition. (Pomfret, CT: SCRC, 1997).
- ²² Personal interviews and discussions with Terry O'Neill, Director of Planning, Hampton, VA, April 24, 2002; Kathryn Price, Hampton youth planner, Boston, Feb 1-3, 2002; Rashida Costley, Hampton youth planner, Rosemont, IL, October 8, 2002.
- ²³ Hampton Planning Department, *Youth Component of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan* (Hampton, VA: Planning Department, 1999); City of Hampton, *Hampton Community Plan: Vision and Goals for Strategic and Comprehensive Planning*, (May 2003 Draft); *Hampton's Community Plan: Land Use and Community Design and Transportation Summary* (December 2004); telephone interview with Cindy Carlson, February 7, 2005. Hampton has worked closely with the Search Institute in bringing a "developmental assets" framework to many areas of child and youth development. The city's Youth Core Team for Developmental Assets engages young people themselves in crafting strategies, including sports team captains, church youth group leaders, school debating team members, and others. Field observations, Hampton, VA, April 22, 2002. See www.search-institute.org for extensive publications and a list of the 40 developmental assets. Hampton, however, has a much stronger and more systemic emphasis on youth civic engagement in its developmental assets strategy than most other cities and organizations.
- ²⁴ Personal interview with Terry O'Neill, Director of Planning, Hampton, VA, April 24, 2002.
- ²⁵ Telephone and personal interviews with Arnold Baker, principal of Kecoughtan High School, April 15, 2005; Allyson Graul, director, Youth Civic Engagement Center, Alternatives, Inc., August 2, 2002; Cindy

Carlson, Rosemont, IL, October 8, 2002. (Graul and Carlson initially facilitated the Kecoughtan advisory group when it shifted from a dialogue and gripe session to structured partnerships and projects). See also the *Idea Book* of the Improving School Achievement committee of Kecoughtan's student advisory board (2002), as well as its *Safe Schools Handbook*; field notes, Hampton High School Principal's Advisory Board meeting, April 23, 2002.

- ²⁶ Field observations, Superintendent's Youth Advisory Group, April 23, 2002; follow up conversations with Dr. Allen Davis III, former superintendent of Hampton schools, and Johnny Pauls, director of secondary education, April 23, 2002; personal discussions with Tamara Whitaker, youth advisory group member and facilitator, Boston, MA, February 1-3, 2002; personal interview with Richard Goll, Rosemont, IL, October 8, 2002.
- ²⁷ Telephone interviews with Allyson Graul, August 2, 2002 and March 9, 2005; Kim Borton, March 9, 2005.
- ²⁸ Telephone interview with Kim Borton, March 9, 2005.
- ²⁹ See presentations by former mayor Mamie Locke, youth planner Kathryn Price, and Cindy Carlson at the federal interagency Youth Summit, Washington, DC, June 2002; personal interview with Richard Goll, Hampton, VA, April 24, 2002, whose current consulting work (Onsite Insights: www.onsiteinsights.com) on youth civic engagement around the country focuses on institutional culture change.
- ³⁰ Personal interview with Mike Montieth, former assistant city manager, Hampton, VA, April 24, 2002. The website of Hampton's Coalition for youth is: www.hampton.gov/foryouth.
- ³¹ Personal interview with Shellae Blackwell, Senior Facilitator, Neighborhood Office (and also a member of the original Youth Coalition), Hampton, VA, April 23, 2002; field notes from Neighborhood Youth Advisory Board, April 22, 2002; Michael Bayer and William Potapchuk, *Learning from Neighborhoods: The Story of the Hampton Neighborhood Initiative, 1993-2003* (Hampton, VA: Neighborhood Office, 2004).
- ³² Personal interview with Laurine Press, director of Parks and Recreation Department, Hampton, VA, April 23, 2002.
- ³³ Personal interview with Laurine Press, Hampton, VA, April 23, 2002; field observations, Hampton/Newport News B.E.S.T. Initiative (Building Exemplary Systems of Training for Youth Workers), Three-Year Anniversary: The Best is Yet to Come, Hampton, VA, April 24, 2002; presentations at the anniversary by Kathryn Johnson, executive director, Alternatives, Inc., and Elaine Johnson, Vice President and Director, National Training Institute for Community and Youth Work, Academy for Educational Development and national B.E.S.T. director. Some 300 youth workers from 50 youth agencies in Hampton and Newport News had completed the core course as of 2002. See also Center for School and Community Services, Academy for Educational Development, *BEST Strengthens Youth Worker Practice: An Evaluation of Building Exemplary Systems of Training for Youth Workers* (New York, NY: AED, 2002).
- ³⁴ Personal interviews with former police chief Thomas Townshend and Sergeant Jeffrey Davis, Hampton, VA, April 24, 2002; field observations at the Newtown Leadership Group/Y-COPE meeting, with Captain William Davis, detective Tony Perkins, Alvin Hunter, president of the Newtown Leadership Group and

member of the citywide Neighborhood Youth Advisory Board, and other members of the community, Hampton, VA, April 23, 2002; presentation by Richard Goll, Rosemont, IL, October 9, 2002.

- ³⁵ J. Eric Oliver, *Democracy in Suburbia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 196. See also American Political Science Association, Standing Committee on Civic Education and Engagement, *Democracy at Risk: Renewing the Political Science of Citizenship* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2005), chapter 3.

Carmen Sirianni is Professor of Sociology and Public Policy at Brandeis University and chair of the Sociology Department. This research was funded by a generous grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts, which permitted our research team not only to do fieldwork and extensive interviewing across the field of youth civic engagement, but also to convene four 3-day national strategy conferences among leading practitioners. I am especially grateful to Tobi Walker and Michael Delli Carpini for their insight and support. I am also appreciative of the civic innovators, public officials, and engaged youth of Hampton, Virginia, for letting me into their many youth advisory groups and planning meetings and for sharing their experiences in interviews. Cindy Carlson and Richard Goll deserve special thanks. Of the hundreds of inspired and effective innovators I have interviewed over the past decade, they would certainly rank among the very best.

Sirianni is author (with Lewis Friedland) of *Civic Innovation in America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001); and *The Civic Renewal Movement: Community Building and Democracy in the United States* (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation Press, 2005). He is currently working on a book, *Investing in Democracy: The Role of Government and Public Policy in Civic Renewal*.

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

**CIRCLE**

The Center for Information & Research
on Civic Learning & Engagement