



CYP Hub Seminar Series on Child and Youth Activism:

Skills, Knowledge, and Values in Youth Voter Activism: an Informal Civic Education Case Study

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Outline for today



About the research project



Key concepts



Methods



Emergent findings from youth perspectives data



Takeaways from youth perspectives in this research



Questions

Background- research context

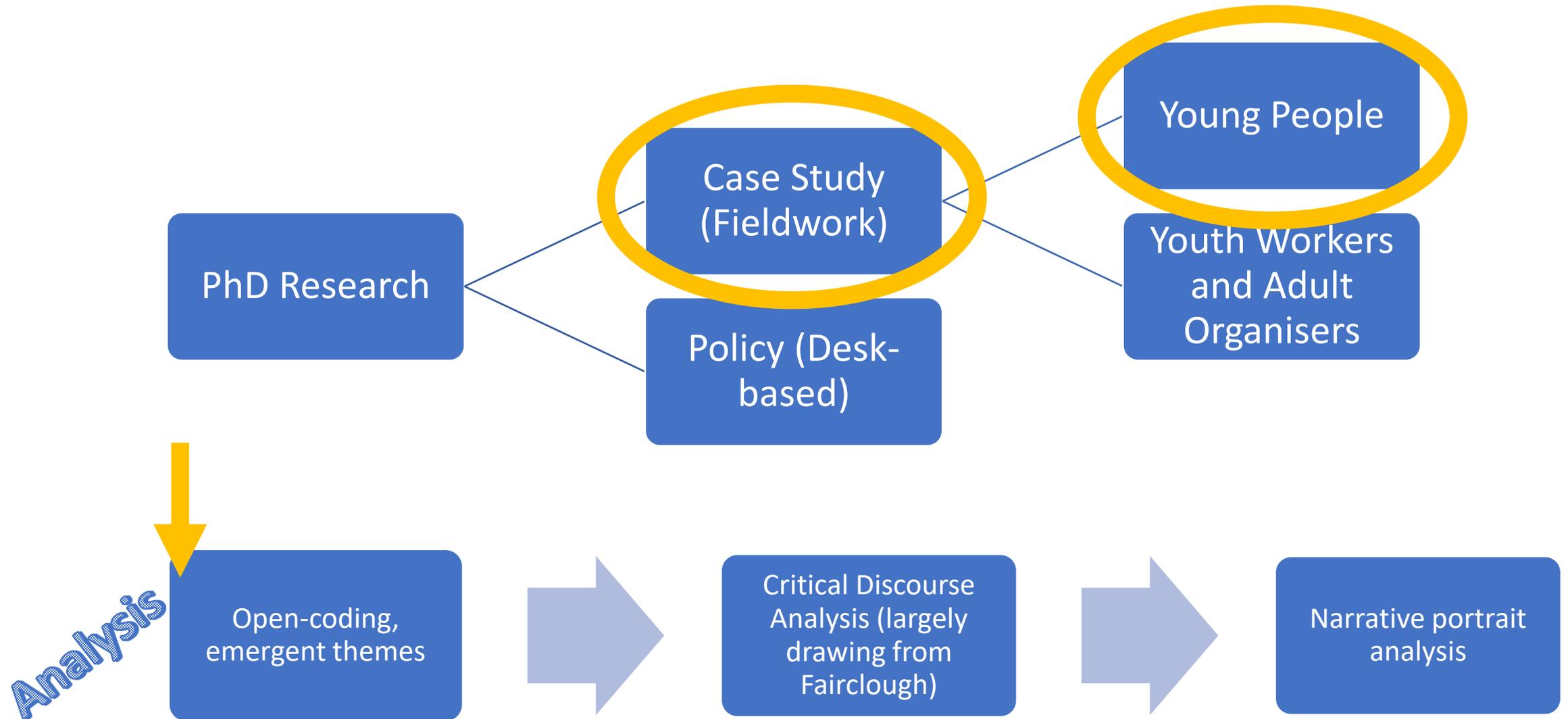
- Out-of-School-Time context
- Civic education (citizenship) context
- Youth activism context
- Political context



'Top 10 States and Districts by Youth Electoral Significance'

 John Fetterman Democratic Party	50.8%	2,678,286
 Mehmet Oz Republican Party	46.8%	2,466,294
 Josh Shapiro Democratic Party	56.1%	2,958,399
 Douglas Mastriano Republican Party	42.1%	2,220,692

Background- PhD study





Research Questions

1. How do youth activists construct 'activist competency' in the youth activist group?
2. How does a dominant policy discourse around 'activist competency' shape and reflect youth constructions of activist competency?

Case study site

- Mission- “a nonpartisan **collaboration** of youth, educators, and organizations working to elevate youth voices, **improve public school civics education**, and **empower youth as civic actors**. Together, we are **building youth political power** and changing the policy and culture around youth voting statewide.”
- Values (among others)- “**Students-first**: Encouraging our students to lead the direction and shape of our work. **Community-based**: Centering the perspectives of youth in oppressed communities of color as well as immigrant, gender nonconforming, and low-income communities”
- Functions as a ‘youth activism group’



Black Lives Matter in Schools Voter Toolkit

This toolkit has many useful tools and lesson plans to engage your students as citizens and encourage them to think critically about the racialized history of voting in the United States.

1. Register to Vote

- **Register to vote:**
payouth.vote/register
- Not sure what party to choose, if any? Take the [ISideWith.Com](https://www.isidewith.com) quiz.
- **Check your voter registration status**

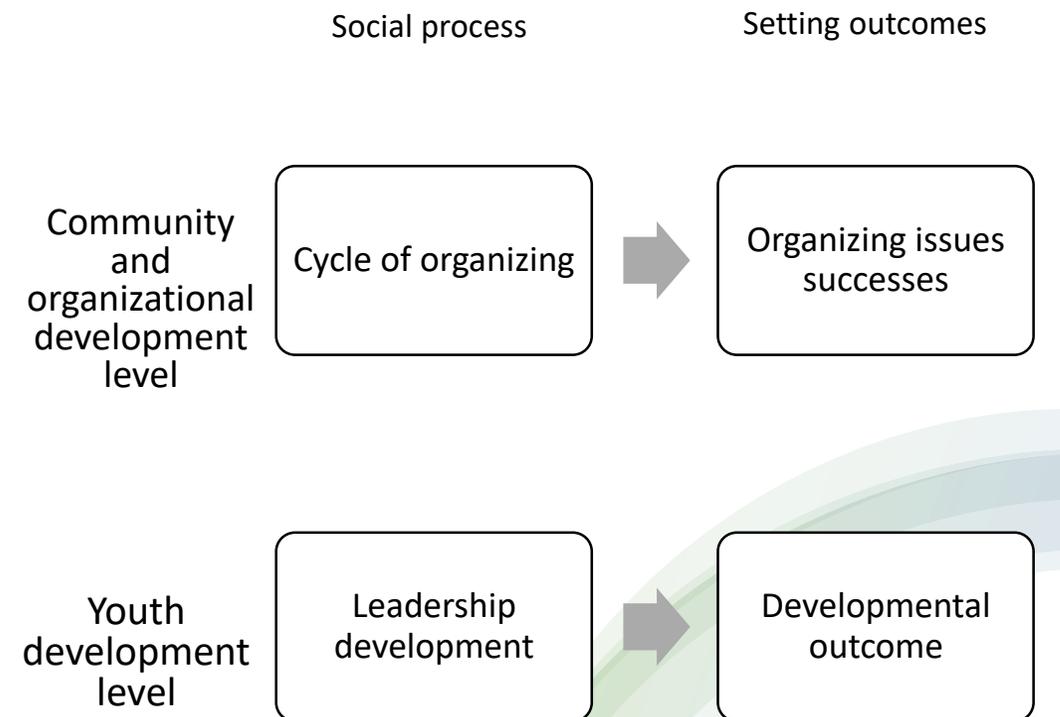
Youth Activism Groups

- Sometimes referred to as community-based youth groups/organisations (e.g., Ginwright and Cammarota, 2007), activist organisations (e.g., Flanagan, Syvertsen and Wray-Lake, 2007), youth organising groups (Kwon, 2013) or civic engagement organizations (e.g., case study)
- Out-of-school spaces dually designed for young people to create social/political change and develop 'positive assets' (based on Positive Youth Development tenets in the US)
- Informal learning spaces
- Can range in being 'youth-driven' and 'adult-driven' youth programs (Larson, R., Walker, K., Pearce, N., 2005)

"Youth activism groups represent distinctive environments for learning and development. Youth contribute their interests and skills to a collective cause that goes beyond their narrow interests, enabling them to accomplish goals that might be unreachable on their own. By interacting with young adults during these campaigns, youth gain opportunities to learn from the strategies, perspectives, and mentoring of caring adults. The public nature of campaigns provides alternative frames for adolescent identity development, especially for youth of color who cope with negative stereotypes. Finally, social action projects connect youth to civic institutions and engage them in authentic learning experiences that demonstrate the relevance of academic skills to everyday life." (Kirshner, 2007, p. 373)

Relationship Between Dual Outcomes:

- “individual youth development skills can potentially be applied toward an analysis of social problems and community activism to offer double benefits – both to the individual and to the community.” (Kwon, 2013; p. 55)
- ‘youth development/organizing divide’ (Kwon, 2013)
- Christens and Kirshner’s (2011) Integrative Framework of Youth Organizing Processes and Outcomes



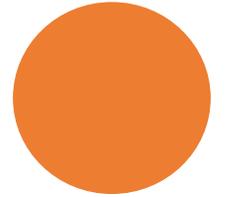
Adapted from Christens and Kirshner (2011)

Possible Tensions Between Youth Development and Youth Activism

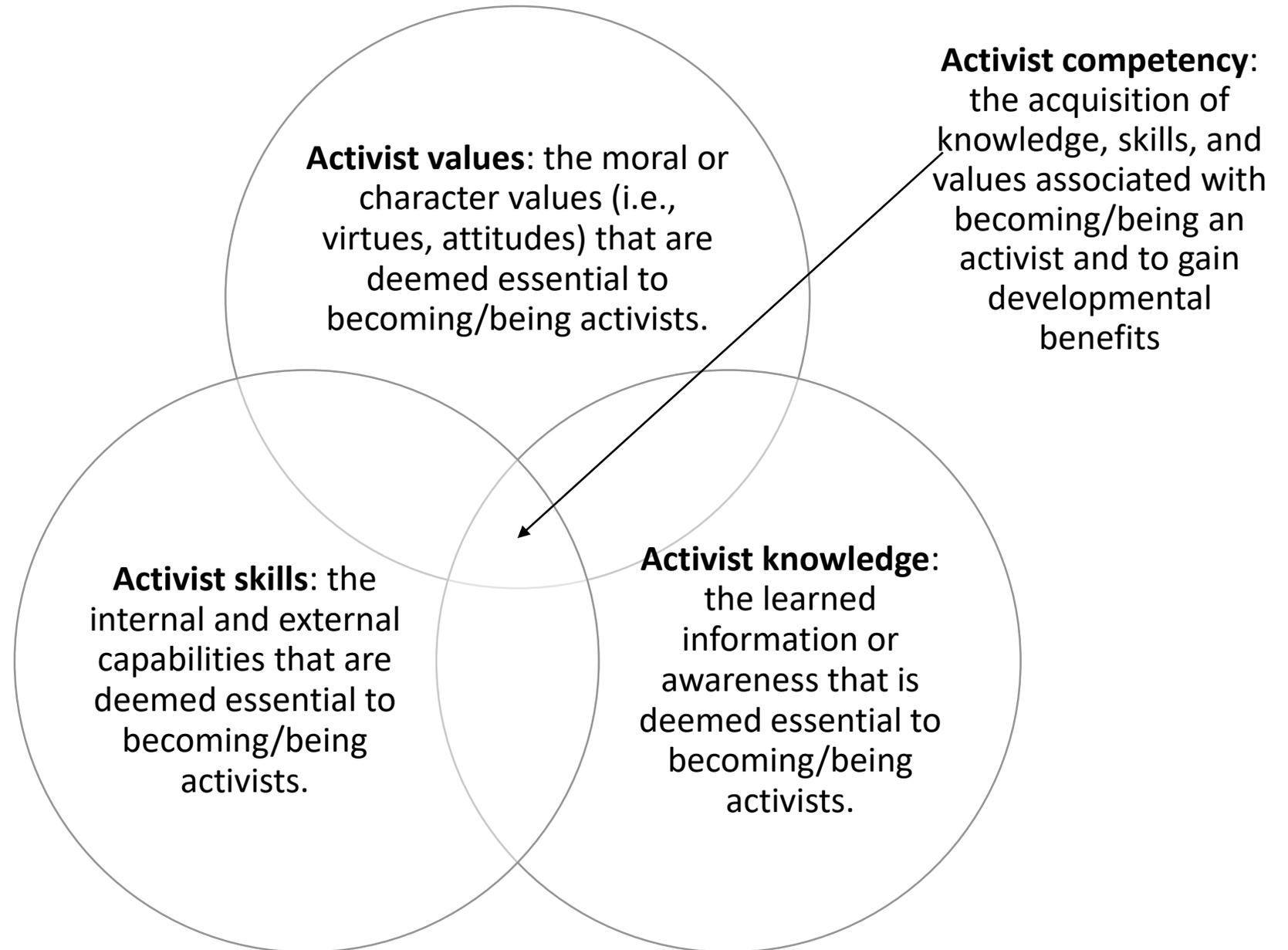
1. Over prioritisation of youth development

2. Shifting of purpose based on policy and funding requirements

3. Existing studies tend to discuss dual outcomes as related but do not conceptualise this relationship



Activist Competency Framework



Activist Competency and American Youth Development Frameworks



Lerner's 5Cs/6cs

Catalano's 15 constructs

Search Institute's 20 internal assets*

Youth work tenets

*broken into the four categories identified by Benson

Activist Competency & Activism, Civic Education, and Political Socialisation Frameworks

- Political Literacy (Crick, 2002; Fyfe, 2007)
- Civic and Citizenship Competence (Youniss, et al., 2002; ten Dam et al., 2011)
- Critical Consciousness (Freire, 1970; Watts et al., 2011)



Conceptual Framework Considerations

'Competency'

- Ties to developmentalism; replication of deficit rhetoric
- Limitations on or influencing means of participation (Moran-Ellis and Tisdall, 2019; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004).

Role of Individuals

- Participation, 'socialization agents,' educator/youth worker role

Discourse

- Considering role of discourse: "ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the 'mental world' of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world." (p. 124, Fairclough, 2003).

Methods

1. Ethnographic Methods	Participant observations
	Interviews with key youth workers/organisers
	<i>Interviews with youth participants</i>
2. Participatory Methods	Participatory workshops
	<i>Youth advisory council</i>
3. Documentary Analysis	Organisation-related texts
	Policy-related texts
	Organisation social media and public outputs

Participatory workshops

- Values
- Skills
- Knowledge

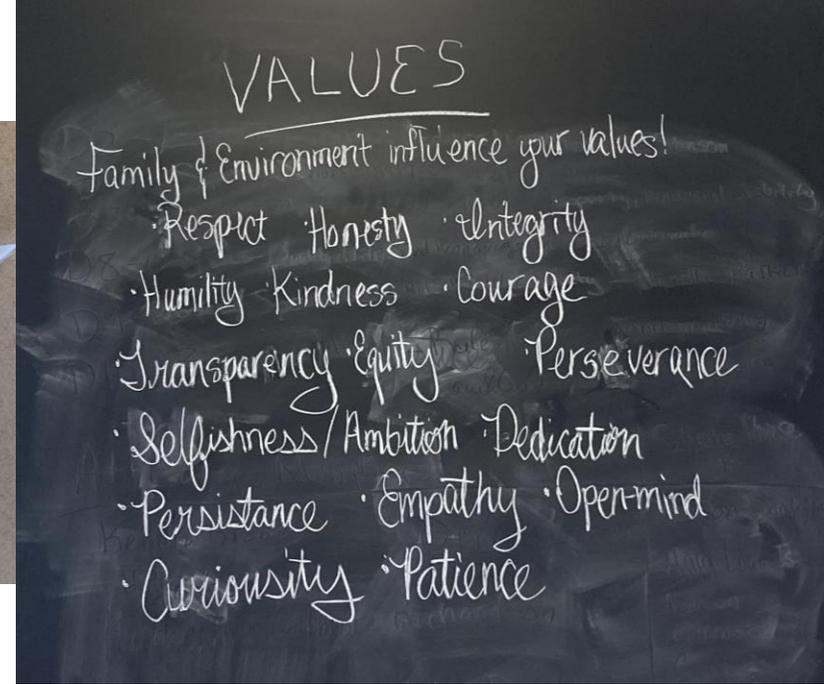


Participant observations

- Summer programme
- Weekly meetings



'Makerspace' Workshop: Exploration of civic and activist values



- 'Who is your activist/civic role model, and what do you admire about them?'
- Discussed 'values' definition
- Makerspace of a key value(s) for activism-
 - "Makerspaces are places where participants may work together to create and co-create knowledge and physical or digital products.... a makerspace will be broadly defined as an area that provides materials and tools to encourage individuals or groups to make things, to create new knowledge, or to solve problems" (p.175, Mersand, 2021)

Word Cloud Workshop: Civic and activist skills in context

- Discussed personal skills (individual level) and collective skills (community and organizational development level)
- Used Mentimeter to create live word clouds around skills.
 - Generate data that prioritises participants' knowledge and, with youth participants, "shift[s] power relations, giving children greater control over their involvement in the research" (Grant, 2017, p. 166)
- Opportunity for reciprocity (and reflection) at site

**What skills have you learned in
PA Youth Vote so far?**



‘Engagement tool-making’ Workshop: Civic knowledge in action through ‘tool-making’ process

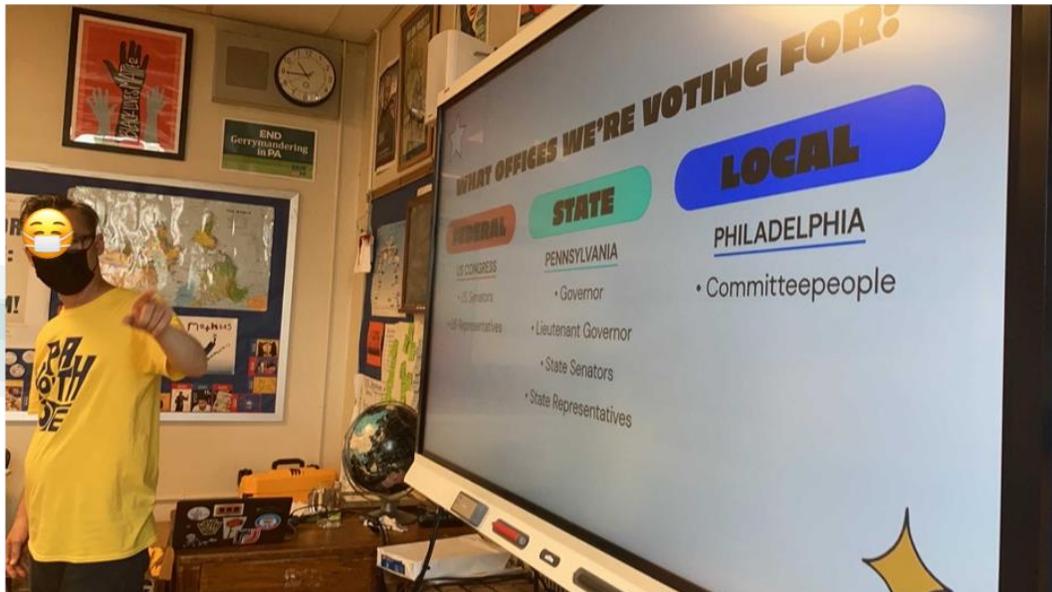
- ‘Choose a meme that best shows how you feel about voting today’
- Discussion around engagement tools
- Tool-making process
 - As part of Forum Theater piece and future activism



Participant observations (summer programme)

- As a participant observer, or someone who actively participates at a site while observing (O'Reilly, 2012)
- Learn more about the youth activist group for focusing future data collection, building rapport, garnering trust from the participants, and framing the research through the participants' perspectives, while also providing data towards the research questions and representing participants' actions (as opposed to what they say) (Shah, 2017)

1. Civic education



2. Artistic activism



4. Emergent Findings From Youth Perspective Data

Emergent Finding 1- Young people see the skills, knowledge, and values they need to be/become activists as all interrelated.

WHY SHOULD  I. G. @ @ @ @ @
VOTE.?!

My vote won't count.
 Yes it will! Think about it this way,
 If 2 million people thought like that, we
 would lose TWO MILLION votes!! (2Mil)
 There won't be any change!
 If people never voted or fought for their
 rights, we would still have
 and the right to ~~make~~ ^{make} ~~exist~~ ^{exist}

How do I vote?
 Register! Then go to the poll
 voting day and make it

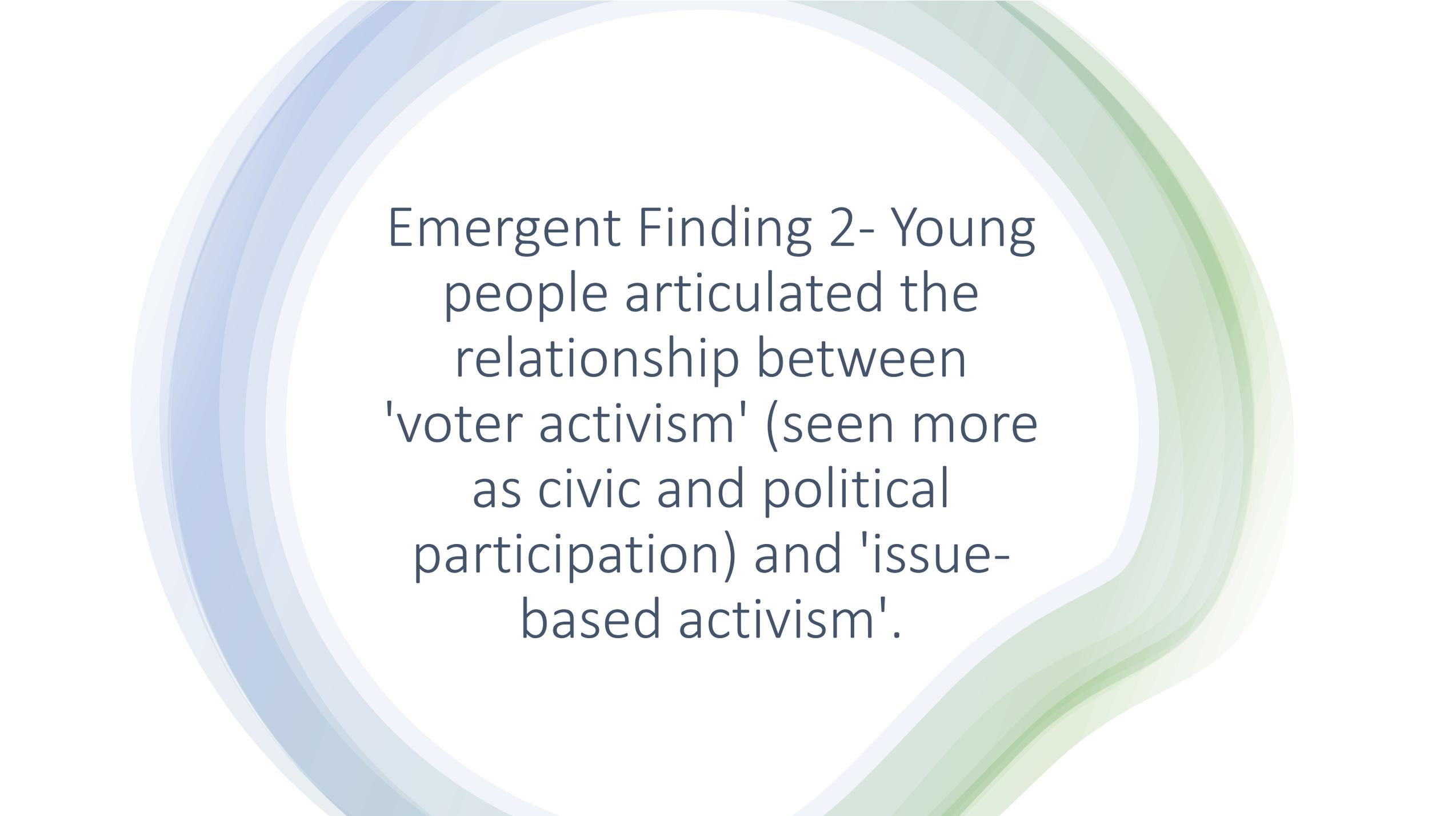
SLOGAN: ~
 - Make gun reform
 the new norm
 - more laws,
 less medical bills
 - Stop the hate
 and update
 - Don't get the AK,
 and you'll be OK!
 - don't look away,
 humanity is not okay

Go vote.
 Now.
 Please :)
 Why Does
 Voting matter?
 Voting allows you
 to put the people
 you want in power
 to be in power.
 Fun fact!
 About 57
 percent of
 eligible voters
 didn't on the
 2022 presidential
 election.

What skills do you need as a young activist/civic organizer?

communication
 understanding
 public speaking
 determination
 perseverance
 confidence
 empathy
 patience
 commitment
 good at public speaking
 faith
 maturity
 ambition
 entertaining
 knowledgeable
 communications
 respect
 passion
 discipline
 leadership
 education
 research
 cooperation
 focus on objective
 kindness
 selflessness
 goal driven
 courage
 drive
 coordination
 preserve
 eagerness
 dignity
 activism
 independence
 creativity
 adaptability
 courage





Emergent Finding 2- Young people articulated the relationship between 'voter activism' (seen more as civic and political participation) and 'issue-based activism'.

the government should NOT have control on my BODY!

This issue is upsetting because

Because it is something the government and people have to stop

- he's angry because the government isn't helping out the way they need to gun violence

wants to feel safe as a minority

Students' voices aren't heard in school so it affects their learning abilities

Counted by state size and electoral college rather than by population

If you have evidence that proves innocence you cannot reappear before court system doesn't work for the innocent

premise issue at our time and as the younger generation we feel responsible for it.

Students aren't heard in schools and it makes it harder to learn.

This issue upsets me because I feel when it comes to deciding the next president, it should be the popular vote.

- Voter suppression
It's not fair

Why? The public denied how he was a bad person and automatically assumed a Chinese person did it. He was racist and people pointed fingers at me then seem great.

Too many people are dying & everyone feels unsafe

Because schools and school districts do not listen to student's concerns or deal with their issues.

It affects me; companies only care about profit

There are more pressing

Government blames the people & doesn't do

Gun violence should be listening

Criminal Justice System

Cost of College

How votes are counted

My issue is the electoral college in voting

Issue: Racism

My issue with voting would be how the votes

My issue is the way the electoral college decides the presidency

Discrimination in school - Olivia

Gun violence

Lack of gun control because it's crazy

Childish gambling

Gun Violence

Education

Climate change

Discrimination in school.

The assassination of Shinzo Abe

Over spoon

Gun Violence

Education
Because schools and school districts do not listen to student's concerns or deal with their issues.

Gun violence

gun reform

climate change

Crime

Climate Change!

CLIMATE CHANGE
It affects my future and companies only care about their profit

ABORTION RIGHTS

Assassination of Shinzo Abe (Former prime Minister of Japan)

Lack of Priority over issues

5.00

... of communication

... ion

Education
Voting in

NOT
open minded
Close-Minded
People Not being
Open minded

Patience
Curiosity
Trust

Being Patient
with
Selfless

Initiating
difficult
Conversations

Being open
to Changing my
mind set.

Be open-minded
about my
decision

Be smart about
my choices
For me Too
Vote.

Being more
open-minded
to decisions

What does change require of me

VOTING
set an
example to
others

Join Voter
Registration
Club at school
and other
organizations
that encourage
voting

to be part of
the percentage

Finding a way
to help

Organizations
Volunteering

Making
accurate information
is being shared

voting (when im old
enough)
activism / spreading
the word
getting more informed

Commitment
to projects/
efforts

work
harder

Commitment

Working more
consistently
+ stop procrastinating

Seek out
information
stop procrastinating

Prioritization

staying
determined/
to your goal

Being aware of
issues going
on

Search for
information myself
instead of waiting
someone to educate

Education
Determination

Using
My
Voice

For real, change requires
sacrificing on my
change now. And
educating myself on
issues, and ways to
fix them.

Action
voice
opinion

Putting myself
at my comfort
zone

Not shy
when speaking
up.

Willingness
to lose
control

Young I can
not immediately
like an
impact

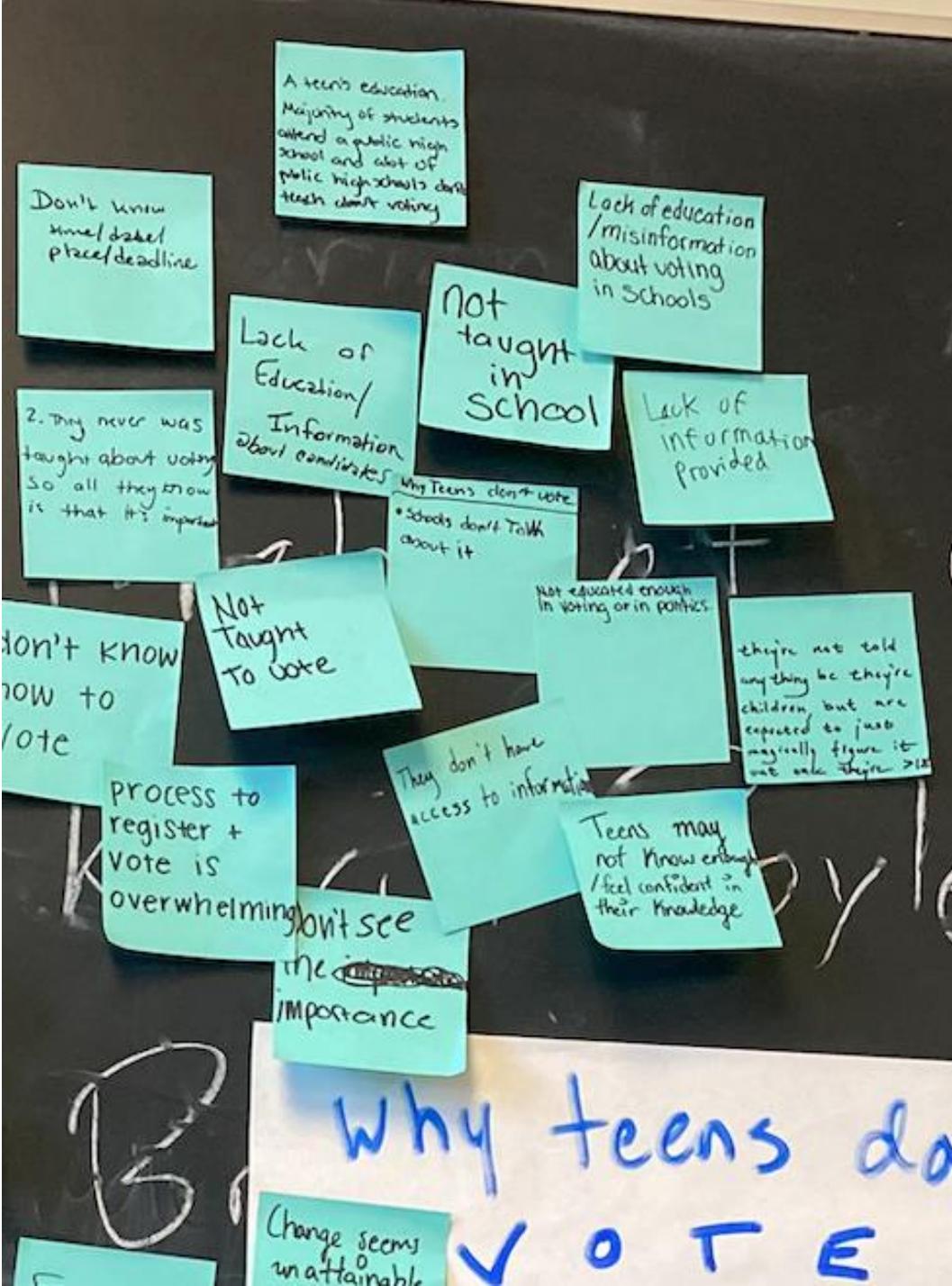
Speaking
out about
Policies that
could be changed
with their vote

Advocate
the reasons
why voting is
so important

Spreading info
on Social Media
being my platform

The background features a decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, curved lines. On the left side, there are three concentric blue lines that curve upwards and to the right. On the right side, there are three concentric green lines that curve downwards and to the left. The lines are semi-transparent and have a soft, blurred appearance, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Emergent Finding 3- Youth
activism groups as a key
space to learn and develop
as youth activists and
politically/civically engaged
citizens



What skills have you learned in [redacted] so far?



Takeaways on youth perspectives in this research methodology

Youth perspectives- This stage of the research project explores how young people understand the competencies they see as fundamental to being/becoming a youth voting activist (and activist more broadly)

- For the young people
- For the case study site
- For the research





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Thank you and I look forward to your questions!

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