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Social Media and Youth Sociopolitical Development: Using YPAR to examine and address key
tensions, conflicts and contradictions

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Abstract

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Abstract

Sociopolitical development (SPD) is an emerging set of theories for the process by which youth develop knowledge, skills, and capacity for critical social and political action.

Adolescence is an important time for SPD; and it is a powerful protective and promotive factor for marginalized young peoples' social, emotional, academic, and political well-being. SPD can also lead to stronger social movements that interrupt oppressive systems/practices that are embedded into U.S. institutions (e.g., education, housing, political systems, healthcare, etc.).

Over the past two decades, social media has come to play an essential role in youth social, emotional, and political development. It has also played a vital role in numerous youth-led social movements over the past decade, such as #BLM, March for Our Lives, and the global youth climate strikes. Despite social media being an essential part of multiple domains of youth development and political participation, it is often neglected in the study of youth SPD. What we

do know about the relationship (which has mostly been explored with young adults) is really ambivalent and has signaled a complex relationship with critical consciousness and the health of social movements.

Our understanding of youth and technology shapes how adults relate to youth across education and practice settings. This includes how families, service providers, and educators incorporate technology into their work and the policies that can contain and restrict youth behavior or technology use. Additionally, in previous local YPAR projects, youth organizers communicated the need for a better understanding of how to create healthier relationships to social media and how to strategically use social media for their organizing work.

Social media is an increasingly central space for young people to develop their sociopolitical identities and engage in sociopolitical action. With a better understanding of social media's relationship to youth SPD, we can better integrate social media as a protective and promotive tool in various youth learning and practice contexts while also working to mitigate the adverse effects of social media on youth SPD. This dissertation outlines a participatory action research (YPAR) project to explore the relationship between social media and youth sociopolitical development. The overarching research questions are: (1) In what ways does social media facilitate youth sociopolitical development, and (2) in what ways does social media limit, or even act counterproductive to, youth sociopolitical development? I applied case study and virtual photovoice research methodologies to address these questions. All analysis was done collaboratively amongst the YPAR collective.

This dissertation highlights three important products of this work. First, it shares the results of the YPAR collective's theoretical and conceptual work. We critically examined normative assumptions of what youth SPD is and collaboratively constructed a definition that is

rooted in youth organizers' lived experience and folk theory. The collective's work is largely compatible with current models of youth SPD but offers additional insight into key social and emotional elements, and further operationalizes key elements in a way that race, power, privilege, and oppression are centered. The young co-researchers' conceptual definition served as an anchor for our study and makes an important contribution to the field of youth SPD.

Then, the YPAR collective addresses the overarching dissertation research questions using the virtual photovoice data. The guiding research questions were: (1) In what ways does social media facilitate youth sociopolitical development, and (2) in what ways does social media limit, or even act counterproductive to, youth sociopolitical development? Using activity theory as an analytical framework, we identified a total of nine important contradictions, conflicts and tensions in the relationship between social media and youth SPD. They identified ways that they, and other young people, work through those issues, and assessed the impact of their actions on youth SPD.

This dissertation outlines the findings for two of these issues. These were highlighted as most prevalent and relevant to how they saw social media interacting with youth SPD. First, the collective explores some of the ways that social media facilitates SPD by increasing accessibility of critical learning, communities, and opportunities for critical action. However, youth researchers note that while social media increases accessibility, social media also amplifies gatekeeping and unhealthy boundary setting in ways that are detrimental to youth SPD. Then, the youth researchers note specific ways that social media facilitates a deepening of critical awareness and analysis, but that social media also contributes to oversimplification, reduction of complex ideas and identities, and echo chambers.

I close by discussing the implications these insights hold for social media policy, digital literacy interventions, and community organizing. I also identify future directions for research, including an exploration of the other seven themes, and additional cross-case comparisons that may provide insight into other questions around social media and healthy youth development. The collective also reflects on how the YPAR project has transformed their critical consciousness development, organizing strategy, and social media use. Planning for translating our findings into action was also discussed.

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DEDICATION

"We make the road by walking"

-Horton, M. & Freire, P. (1990). *We Make the Road by Walking*. Edited by Brenda Bell, John Gaventa and John Peters, p.6

To those who walked ahead of me, alongside me, and to those charting new roads.

**The phrase "we make the road by walking" is an adaptation of a piece by the Spanish poet Antonio Machado. One line reads "se hace camino al andar," or "you make the way as you go." See Antonio Machado, Selected Poems, trans. Alan S. Trueblood (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 143.*

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Problems and Possibilities of Social Media for Youth Sociopolitical Development

Sociopolitical development (SPD) is an emerging set of theories for the process by which youth develop knowledge, skills, and capacity for critical social and political action (Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Watts et al., 2003). Conceptual and practical models of SPD generally emphasize the factors of critical consciousness, efficacy or empowerment, and sociopolitical action (Diemer et al. 2016; Christens, Winn & Duke, 2016; Watts et al. 2011; Jemal, 2017; Jemal & Bussey, 2018).

Adolescence is an important time for SPD. During this time, many young people develop their abstract moral and cognitive reasoning, build skills crucial for perspective-taking, self-reflection, sense of responsibility to others and develop their belief system (Collins, 1997; Kohlberg, 1973; Erikson, 1968; Damon et al., 2003; Martinez et al., 2011). In recent decades, youth development, education, and public health researchers have shown increasing interest in facilitating SPD in school, community and health service settings due to its potential as a protective and promotive factor for racially and gender minoritized youth well-being (Diemer et al., 2016; Christens et al., 2016). SPD can also lead to stronger social movements that interrupt the systems of oppression that are embedded into U.S. institutions (e.g., education, housing, political systems, healthcare, etc.) that impact marginalized youth well-being (Heberle et al., 2020).

Now, perhaps more than ever, social media plays an essential role in youth social and political development. Social media (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Reddit) has become ubiquitous for young people in the past two decades. Just in the past two years (2020-2021), we have seen social learning take place more in virtual community spaces

than in in-person social learning communities. Social media has also played an essential role in numerous youth-led social movements over the past decade, such as the Arab Spring, The Occupy movement, #BLM, the Parkland students' March for Our Lives, and the 2019 global youth climate strikes. At the time of writing this, no current survey of youth (ages 13-18) attitudes on social media and social change is available; but a 2018 national survey done by Pew Research Center of young adults (ages 18-29) highlighted people's perceptions on the role of social media in social change. They found that 70% of young adult respondents felt that social media effectively got elected officials to pay attention to issues, 73% thought it helped create sustained movements for social change, and 56% thought it was important for influencing policy decisions. Sixty-eight percent believe that social media highlights important issues that might not get attention otherwise. Seventy-one percent (71%) believe that it helps voice the interests of underrepresented groups, and 61% believe that social media makes it easier to hold powerful people accountable for their actions (Anderson et al., 2018).

Some research suggests that social media can facilitate positive youth SPD and sustainable community change in adolescents' ecosystems. However, social media can also limit or be counterproductive to youth SPD. Social media use has been linked to depression, anxiety, social ostracization, self-esteem, reinforcing stereotypes, vicarious racial trauma, and objectified self-concept in young people (Uhls et al., 2017; Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2011; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2016). These are all factors that deter youth well-being and may counter core aspects of SPD such as critical reflection, psychological empowerment, political efficacy, and motivation. There is also ambivalence about the effectiveness of social media on social action and sustainable change. Amongst the same young adult respondents in the Pew Research Center survey mentioned above, 78% of young adult respondents felt that social media distracted people

from critical issues, and 72% believed that social media makes people think they are making a difference when they are not (Anderson et al., 2018).

Despite social media being an essential domain for youth development and political participation, it is often neglected in the study of SPD (Bañales et al., 2020; Diemer et al., 2017; Duggan & Brenner, 2013); and as outlined above, research on the relationship of social media to young and older adult political development and activity signals a complex and ambivalent relationship. More attention has been paid to the role of social media and young adults/adult populations, with particular attention to social media and political participation. One reason for this may be that young adults and adults are of voting age and can participate in more “conventional” forms of sociopolitical action. However, young people under 18 participate in public and political life in broader ways.

Study Purpose

Our understanding of technology shapes how adults relate to youth work practice and education. This includes how families, service providers, and educators relate to youth, the policies that can contain and restrict youth behavior, and how we teach and mentor the next generation. Social media is an increasingly central space for young people to develop their sociopolitical identities and engage in sociopolitical action. With a better understanding of social media’s relationship to youth SPD, we can better integrate social media as a protective and promotive tool in various youth learning contexts while also working to mitigate the adverse effects of social media on youth SPD. This supports the healthy development of youth and simultaneously helps build stronger intergenerational social movements.

The area of inquiry and study design are both rooted in bell hooks' understanding of marginality as a point of resistance. In her 1989 paper on marginalization and culture, she speaks to the transformative power of marginality,

Marginality [is] much more than a site of deprivation. In fact I was saying just the opposite: that it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance. It was this marginality that I was naming as a central location for the production of a counter hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives. As such, I was not speaking of a marginality one wishes to lose, or give up, or surrender as part of moving into the center, but rather as a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds. (p.341)

Technology plays a major role in the production and preservation of hegemonic discourse, oppressive cultural norms, systems, and actions. However, marginalized communities have constructed counter-hegemonic spaces of resistance and self/social transformation on social media. Marginalized peoples have created spaces where they can reassert their identities, build capacity for sociopolitical action, and produce and disseminate counter-narratives (Florini, 2019).

The YPAR collective in this project is made up of young people with multiple marginalized identities, and varying sociopolitical experiences, who are all committed to critical consciousness and social transformation. Together, we identify and examine the ambivalent relationship between social media and youth SPD. The collective illuminates a series of key contradictions, tensions and conflicts that are at play. They pay special attention paid to the way tools, sociocultural norms and communities interact to create or disrupt these tensions. In doing so, this work also opens insights into ways educators and social workers can leverage the power

of social media to support youth critical consciousness and critical action, while also offering unique insights into the ways social media works against SPD for marginalized youth.

Research Questions & Dissertation Overview

This dissertation outlines a multiple case study, including a youth participatory action research (YPAR) project to explore the relationship between social media and youth sociopolitical development. The overarching research questions are: (1) In what ways does social media facilitate youth sociopolitical development, and (2) in what ways does social media limit, or even act counterproductive to, youth sociopolitical development? I applied case study and virtual photovoice research methodologies to address these questions. All analysis was done collaboratively amongst the YPAR collective.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation provides relevant background literature and outlines the key theoretical frameworks that influenced the research process. This includes an overview of existing SPD literature, a summary of social media literature relevant to SPD or civic engagement, and key learning and development frameworks from which this study is rooted. It also outlines the epistemic and analytic frameworks that guide research design and analysis, most notably youth participatory action research (YPAR) and activity theory.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methods, a multi-site case study approach that utilizes virtual photovoice methodology. I worked with twelve young people, ages 14-19, who are diverse in social identities, sociopolitical development, and level of engagement in social justice activity in their online and offline communities. Participant-researchers were trained in data collection and research ethics basics. From May 2021 through October 2021, we collected visual and textual data, recorded semi-structured interviews and unstructured dialogues, written reflections, and surveys. The youth co-researchers and I analyzed photovoice data using the

SHOWeD approach (Wang 1999), supplemented by an analytical framework offered by Wang & Hannes (2020). Using a grounded theory analytical approach, I completed the first-round analysis of all interviews, dialogue, written, and textual data. I facilitated youth researchers through second-order coding.

Chapter 4, outlines the results of theoretical and conceptual work done by the YPAR collective before we collected and analyzed data. I facilitated a critical examination of the young researchers' conceptual understanding of youth sociopolitical development. This made our normative assumptions of what positive SPD is more explicit and clarified how SPD was being operationalized in the virtual photovoice project. Our guiding research question was: How do adolescent community organizers with varying social and political experiences understand and conceptualize youth sociopolitical development? The data source is a semi-structured interview with each co-researcher, along with recorded unstructured dialogue in the planning phase of the virtual photovoice project. The young co-researchers' conceptual definition of youth SPD served as an anchor for our study and makes an important contribution to the field of youth SPD.

Chapters 5 and 6 address the overarching dissertation research questions using the virtual photovoice data. The guiding research questions were: (1) In what ways does social media facilitate youth sociopolitical development, and (2) in what ways does social media limit, or even act counterproductive to, youth sociopolitical development? Photovoice is a participatory research process where people document their experiences through photos and then critically reflect on to promote positive change in their communities (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 1999). This process was modified to take place virtually and capture images of social media as a landscape.

The YPAR work highlights two of the key issues, themes, and theories about the ambivalent relationship between social media and youth sociopolitical development. While the collective identified a myriad of important themes, these contradictions, conflicts and tensions were highlighted as most prevalent and relevant to how they saw social media interacting with youth SPD.

Chapter 5 explores some of the ways that social media facilitates SPD by increasing accessibility of critical learning, communities, and opportunities for critical action. However, youth researchers note that while social media increases accessibility, social media also amplifies gatekeeping and unhealthy boundary setting in ways that are detrimental to youth SPD. In chapter six, the youth researchers note specific ways that social media facilitates a deepening of critical awareness and analysis, but that social media also contributes to oversimplification, reduction of complex ideas and identities and echo chambers. These two sets of contradictions were most prevalent and emphasized across the ‘cases’ or researchers’ experiences, so they are the focus of this dissertation. United, these chapters provide a solid foundation for further inquiry and give important insights into the problems and possibilities of using social media for youth SPD. Specifically, it gives insight into the complicated system of social activity that affects youth sociopolitical development, emphasizing the role of social media.

Chapter 7 discusses important findings and insights across the dissertation. The youth co-researchers identified numerous important themes and issues that are not currently included. The unexplored tensions, conflicts, and contradictions are outlined and additional future directions for research are proposed. Limitations of this study are also explored. This includes a discussion about the ways that the unique moment in time shaped the researchers’ lives and the study. This project was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic, where technology played an

unprecedented role in all aspects of youth learning and social development. This study also took place after the Black Lives Matter (BLM) uprisings of 2020, and during the continued BLM movement of 2021. These events were cited as very influential to all youth researchers. The final chapter also discusses implications for the youth researchers, the broader field of research, practice, and other recommendations for action.

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Chapter 2: Background Literature

Youth Sociopolitical Development

Sociopolitical development (SPD) is the process through which people acquire skills, knowledge, emotional faculties, and capacity for acting against systems of oppression (Hope & Bañales, 2018; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Watts et al., 2003). Theoretically, SPD asserts a critical stance on human development, meaning that cultural and political forces are recognized as central factors in social, emotional, and cognitive development and well-being (Watts et al., 2003). Learning more about SPD during adolescence is essential because this is a time when many develop their abstract moral and cognitive reasoning, build skills crucial for perspective-taking, self-reflection, sense of responsibility to others (Kohlberg, 1973; Erikson, 1968; Damon et al., 2003; Martinez et al., 2012). It is also when adolescents make essential developments in their belief systems. Youth can begin to develop a more nuanced understanding of systems of oppression and develop their patterns for system justification, or the degree to which people are motivated to defend and justify the status quo (Godfrey et al., 2019; Jost & van der Toorn, 2012).

For marginalized youth (including youth of color, poor and working class, immigrant, refugee, and LGBTQIA+), developing critical consciousness and psychological empowerment can act as a protective and promotive factor for positive youth development, mental, emotional and physical health, and academic resilience (Poteat et al., 2020; Godfrey et al., 2019; Christens & Peterson, 2011; Prilleltensky, 2008; Zimmerman, 1990). For example, numerous empirical studies have linked positive SPD with positive racial identity development and healing from racist trauma for Black youth (Ginwright, 2010; Hope & Spencer, 2017; Watts et al., 1999). A high sense of sociopolitical control (i.e., beliefs about one's capabilities and efficacy in social

and political systems) was associated with fewer adverse mental health outcomes (Zimmerman et al., 1999; Christens & Peterson, 2012). Studies have also shown that youth who have greater levels of critical consciousness also have a better understanding of their career aspirations, interests, higher motivation levels, higher levels of community engagement, and lessened risks of adverse or unhealthy psychosocial outcomes (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Stewart et al., 2008; Pillen et al., 2020).

As such, SPD has been increasingly centered in youth development, social and emotional learning, and leadership development work with socially marginalized youth (Watts et al., 2003; Noguera et al., 2006; Kirshner, 2015; Galletta & Jones, 2010; Cahill, 2007). SPD is also associated with civic activism (Watts et al., 2011) and voting behaviors in adulthood (Diemer & Li, 2011). As such, it is critical for the health and sustainability of civic activism and social movements which aim to address pervasive racial, economic, and other social inequalities in the United States.

Theoretical Roots

Theoretically, SPD expands on the ideas of empowerment and critical consciousness. Empowerment is the process through which individuals and groups gain greater control over their identities and lives, claim one's rights, and address social injustice (Watts et al., 2003, Rappaport, 1987, Peterson, 2014, Jemal, 2017). While psychological empowerment is crucial to social change efforts, the link between empowerment and social action remains unclear. SPD literature can help us better understand the relationship between empowerment and action so that emancipatory social change efforts on individual, group, and community-levels can be better supported.

In addition to linking empowerment with action, SPD asserts a critical stance on human and social development and centers the role of cultural and political forces in shaping one's experiences of the social world, how they understand those experiences and how they engage (Watts et al., 2003). SPD draws from Paulo Freire's theories of popular education, 'conscientization,' praxis, and 'transformative potential' (Freire, 2000; Jemal, 2017). Freire believed that education is point zero for sustainable social change, a place where one's transformative potential is actualized. In the 'transformative potential' framework, consciousness and action are understood to be simultaneous and reciprocating processes that can address injustice across the micro, mezzo, and macro ecosystems (Freire, 2000). Without critical consciousness, social change is "subject to whimsey and chance" (Charlton, 1998, p.102) and at the same time, confronting the problem contributes to a deeper and more thorough understanding of the problem - and this understanding cannot be reached without action and experience (Corcoran et al., 2015; Freire, 2000, Jemal, 2017). In the 'transformative potential' framework, consciousness and action are understood to be simultaneous and reciprocating processes that can address injustice across the micro, mezzo, and macro ecosystems (Freire, 2000).

Freire's theory of "conscientization" or critical consciousness posits that action and reflection are reciprocal processes that cannot be uncoupled. Freire writes, "It happens that to every understanding, sooner or later an action corresponds. Once [one] perceives a challenge, understands it, and recognizes the possibilities of response, [they] act. The nature of that action corresponds to the nature of [their] understanding. Critical understanding leads to critical action; magic understanding to magic response" (Freire, 1973, p.44). This idea is closely linked to his theories of praxis, where he argued for the mutually constitutive relationship between reflection

and action. Reflection and action inform one another, and when this process is directed at structures of oppression, transformative change is possible (Freire, 1973, 2000).

Models of SPD for Research and Practice

SPD is increasingly centered in critical youth work, youth development (Watts et al., 2003; Noguera et al., 2006), and several different SPD practice models have emerged. Common elements include critical reflection and critical action (Diemer et al. 2016; Christens et al., 2016; Watts et al. 2011; Jemal, 2017; Jemal & Bussey, 2018). In most models, there are four interrelated but distinct components: (1) social awareness and analysis, (2) agency or empowerment, (3) opportunity structures, and (4) critical action. Social analysis refers to the ability to name and analyze root causes and structures of inequality. Agency is the internal belief that one can effect social change. Opportunity structures refer to spaces where young people have meaningful opportunities to engage in social and civic involvement (e.g., schools, programs, jobs, organizations, etc.). Societal involvement refers to the young persons' actual engagement in action to challenge systems of oppression. Engaging in sociopolitical action: (1) introduces youth to civic skills, practices, and processes necessary to operate organizations, (2) exposes them to ideological positions they can consider and reject or incorporate into their developing worldview (Seider et al., 2020; Fishman et al., 2001; McAdam, 1986; Sirianni & Shor, 2009; Youniss et al., 1997). A summary of key components and how dominant SPD models conceptualize that element is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Key Factors Identified in Critical Consciousness & SPD Practice Models

Model	Critical Reflection or Consciousness	Critical Action
Diemer et al. 2015	Perceived Inequality – "...youth's critical awareness and/or analysis of social inequities." Egalitarianism – "...the endorsement of equitable social position among societal groups."	Sociopolitical Participation – "...participating in individual and/or collective action to produce sociopolitical change."
Christens, Winn & Duke, 2016	"...the ability to analyze inequities and injustices connected to one's social conditions."	Political Efficacy: "...the sense that the individual or a collective has the ability and capacity to change their political and social conditions."
Watts et al. 2011	"...the process of people coming to see critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves"	Political Efficacy: "...the behavioral element of CC and refers to actions designed to counter or respond to justice in a liberatory manner."
Jemal & Bussey, 2018	Awareness - "...socio-ecosystemic reflection on the equitable elements, factors, and causes that perpetuate [an] identified problem...." Behavioral-response- "...socio-ecosystemic reflection on potential behavioral responses to the inequity within the identified problem...." Consequence - "...socio-ecosystemic reflection on the consequences of the inequity for the development and implementation of potential solutions...."	(interpersonal) (1) Destructive: "Aggressive or direct action taken to perpetuate inequity" & "Actions taken that directly contribute to systemic inequity in one's life and includes the perpetuation of intrapersonal oppression and/or privilege in various life domains." (2) Avoidant: "Passive action or inaction that allows the perpetuation of inequity" & "The lack of agency and problem-solving methods and communication that do not reduce or

Includes three levels of consciousness: denial, blame, and critical

actively contribute to, but indirectly reinforce systemic inequity and/or marginalizing processes within one's own life."

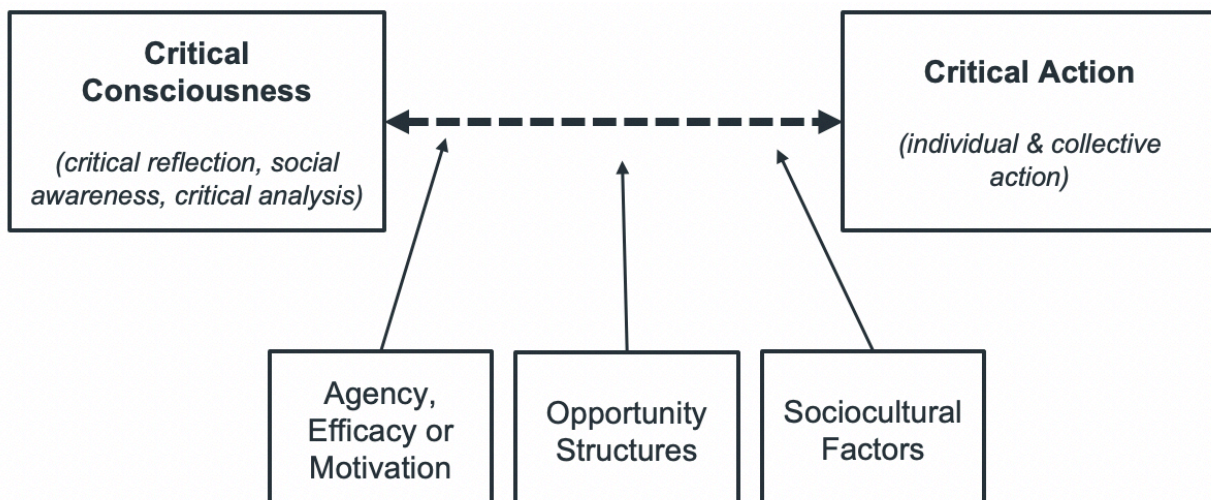
(3) Critical: "Assertive action that addresses inequity" & "Direct action (e.g., behaviors, problem-solving methods, communication) that directly combats systemic inequity within one's own life."

Critical reflection and critical action are theorized to have a bidirectional relationship.

Some scholars also theorize that the relationship between critical reflection and action is moderated by political self-efficacy/agency and the availability of meaningful opportunity structures (i.e., schools, churches, part-time jobs, and community organizations) (Watts & Flanagan 2007). Figure 1 summarizes the theorized relationship between critical consciousness, action, agency, motivation, opportunity structures and sociocultural factors. I have adapted this figure from the summary of literature (Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Diemer et al., 2015; Christens et al., 2016; Watts et al., 2011; Anyiwo et al., 2018).

Figure 1

Summary of Key Elements in SPD Practice Models



Critical Reflection. Critical reflection refers to (1) thinking critically about accepted assumptions, beliefs, feelings, and ideas, (2) uncovering the hidden interests underlying personal, social, and cultural beliefs or assumptions, (3) being able to identify root causes of inequality and ways that history continues to impact present-day ways of life - particularly interpersonal, internalized and structural dimensions of oppression (Diemer et al., 2017; Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Watts et al., 2003; Seider et al., 2020). Critical reflection is inextricably linked with sociopolitical action. Numerous studies have demonstrated that an individual's commitment to engaging in sociopolitical action depends in large part on one's perceptions of the injustice as being both unjust and systemic (Seider et al., 2020; Curtin, 2011; Hyers, 2007; Weiss-Gal et al., 2009)

Some scholars have identified subdomains of critical reflection. Diemer and colleagues (2014) identified the practice of critical analysis of social inequalities (e.g., racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic inequalities) and the value of egalitarianism as being two subconstructs. Jemal (2017) offered the idea of transformative consciousness, which includes social awareness, reflections on potential behavioral responses to inequality, and reflections on the consequences of inequality and its' potential solutions.

Sociopolitical Action. Sociopolitical action, also known as critical action in some SPD literature, refers to peoples' actual engagement in events or activities to challenge oppressive forces and structures and unequal conditions. Involvement in critical action is multidimensional. SPD literature recognizes the importance of both "conventional" and "social cause" efforts aimed at improving and shaping one's community (Alder & Goggin, 2005; Anyiwo et al., 2020; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Having an inclusive definition of sociopolitical action is important for

understanding how young people engage in the broader political system. Multiple studies have suggested that young people are involved in politics differently than before (Calenda & Meijer, 2009). Young people are less interested in conventional political participation forms and are more inclined towards more "unconventional" popular and grassroots strategies, such as street protests.

An inclusive and expansive definition of critical action is especially important in SPD research/practice with youth of color, as racism, xenophobia, classism, and other forms of oppression construct barriers to conventional political participation (Flanagan & Levine, 2010) and erode trust in institutionalized political systems. Many racially and socially marginalized youth conceptualize their membership in cultural and ethnic organizations as a form of political action in and of itself (Ballard, 2020), and there are diverse ways that youth of color engage in racial justice work (Aldana et al., 2019; Hope et al., 2019). As such, SPD literature considers sociopolitical action inclusive of traditional, non-traditional, individual, and collective actions. Some examples often cited in SPD literature include signing petitions, offering aid to individuals, doing civic engagement work, joining social justice organizations, participating in political party activities or campaigns, wearing political messages on clothing, activism, joining cultural and ethnic organizations, and action involving community-based initiatives, or campaigns outside conventional institutions (Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Diemer et al., 2017; Gaby, 2017; Ballard, 2020).

In recent studies, there have been three domains of marginalized youth's sociopolitical action: (1) individual, personal or interpersonal action, (2) group action, (3) mass action (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015; Anyiwo et al., 2020). Individual sociopolitical action can occur through traditional political activities such as voting and letter writing to officials, community

engagement, and wearing clothing with cultural and political messages (Bañales et al., 2020; Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Littenberg-Tobias & Cohen, 2016; Hope et al., 2019). Interpersonal sociopolitical action includes individual interactions, such as reprimanding peers, family, other adults, or strangers who make oppressive statements or take action to defend someone racially or politically targeted. Group action refers to the collective action of an organization or coalition towards a similar social justice goal. Mass action refers to forms of collective engagement such as organizing, protesting, and campaigning (Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Checkoway & Aldana, 2013; Nicholas et al., 2019).

Efficacy, Empowerment & Motivation. Throughout the SPD literature, scholars have identified the importance of young peoples' internal beliefs to effect social change (Beaumont, 2010). In particular, youth with marginalized identities are more likely to engage in critical reflection and sociopolitical action when they believe that they can affect their community (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Constructs of efficacy, empowerment, and motivation have all been identified as important factors in youth SPD that get at this idea.

While these constructs are deeply interconnected with critical reflection and sociopolitical action, the literature suggests they play a moderating role in adolescents' sociopolitical values and beliefs in a just world (Mohiyeddini & Montada, 1998), their sense of social responsibility (Hope, 2016), and commitment to activism or civic engagement (Watts & Guessous, 2006; Hope 2016). Models of SPD have identified the subconstructs of agency and commitment to address social inequality (Watts et al., 2011) and young people's ability and capacity to change sociopolitical conditions (Christens et al., 2016). Young peoples' racial identities and class background are also closely linked to adolescents' political identity and

efficacy ideas. Young people of color and low-income youth are the least likely to feel like their voices are heard (Marchi, 2012; Rubin, 2007; Rubin et al., 2009; Van Steenbergen, 1994).

Opportunity Structures. Several scholars have noted the importance of opportunity structures in SPD. Sociological and political theories assert that a young person's potential for democratic participation is strongly influenced by the availability of meaningful opportunities for action in their communities (Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Keeter, 2002). While Freire did not use the term 'opportunity structures' he theorized that pedagogy served as a structure that could either foster or discourage the development of critical consciousness, and numerous scholars built off this work to examine the way that formal and informal learning environments that can either reify oppressive conditions or challenge them (Apple, 1990; Giroux, 1981; Paris, 2012).

Opportunity structures can include physical spaces, social capital, access to other resources, clear roles, and mentorship (Ginwright 2005, 2007; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Ogbu, 1987).

Sociocultural Influences. Finally, sociocultural factors shape the SPD process for racially, gender or other socially marginalized young people (Watts et al., 1999; Anyiwo et al., 2018). Adolescence is a time when issues of race, culture, identity and discrimination are particularly salient, as youth are exploring and building their identities (Anyiwo et al., 2018).

Anyiwo and colleagues (2018) identified some of the specific ways that racial discrimination, racial socialization and racial identity development contribute to young peoples' critical social analysis and engagement in sociopolitical action. Identity development refers to the multifaceted processes of developing labels, awareness, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and enactment on ones' social identities (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Identity development and critical reflection are interrelated processes (Watts et al., 1999; Kiang et al., 2021; Matthews et al., 2019). For socially marginalized youth, critical consciousness and identity development often

are simultaneous processes (Kiang et al., 2021; Hope et al., 2015). Some scholars have found that experiences of racial discrimination can prompt youth to critically analyze social inequality and critical action (Benner et al., 2013; White-Johnson, 2012). However racial socialization may shape how youth of color understand racial discrimination and respond to it (Anyiwo et al., 2018). Racial socialization is the mechanism through which youth shape their beliefs about their racial group and learn about the history and social values of their racial communities (Hughes et al., 2016).

Social Media and Youth Sociopolitical Development

In its simplest definition, social media is a technology tool that virtually connects users with ideas and other users (boyd & Ellison, 2007) and is built on interactivity, participation, and exchange (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). As technology continues to evolve, so does the use, format, and function of social media (Langmia et al., 2013; Tyree & Kirby, 2017). Regardless of this continuously changing nature, all social media sites or applications allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile, (2) construct a community of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and engage with that community, and the community made by others in that system (boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Technology has reshaped the way we participate in public life, access and assess information, and increased access to some crucial resources for social change. Social media has made information more portable, personalized, and participatory (Purcell et al., 2010). Social media has brought many of those same qualities to sociopolitical participation. Social media has transformed the production of cultural narratives by providing people who have been marginalized from mainstream media sources a direct and easily sharable platform for sharing

their experience or perspective. As discussed in Chapter 1, social media has also served as a platform for organizing and mobilizing political campaigns and mass movements.

However, the relationship between social media and youth sociopolitical development is understudied (Bañales et al., 2020; Diemer et al., 2017; Duggan & Brenner, 2013). Drawing from the relevant literature on social media and youth and young adults, the following section outlines a review of literature on key SPD elements: (1) critical reflection, (2) sociopolitical action, (3) efficacy, empowerment, and motivation, (4) opportunity structures and (5) sociocultural factors.

Social Media and Critical Reflection

Social media has profoundly influenced how young people develop social awareness, how critical analysis of information is applied, and identity development. For developing critical awareness and analysis of social issues, social media has become the most popular news source for the 18-29 demographic (API, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2015; Shearer & Gotfried, 2017). Furthermore, Costera-Meijer (2007) and Singer et al. (2009) found that young adults did not seek out information as an end itself but sought out information about social issues to communicate better, become personally inspired to take action, develop a sense of belonging and meaning within their communities.

Social media has contributed to increasingly blurry distinctions between active and passive consumption of information (Bruns, 2005). Passive consumption on social media is merely reading or observing, whereas active consumption refers to when the user consciously decides to share information or comment (Pagani et al., 2011). Through social media, young people can be increasingly active in consuming and producing sociopolitical information. Both forms of consumption have been linked to aspects of SPD. Digital participation and non-

participation (in seemingly passive acts such as listening, liking, or lurking) can be early forms of civic engagement (Marchi & Clark, 2021). Additionally, active consumption is positively associated with a greater sense of well-being amongst users (Burke & Kraut, 2016, Ellison & Boyd, 2013; Kross et al., 2013; Verduyn et al., 2015) and increased online political expression (Yu, 2016).

Concerning assessing legitimacy, attention has shifted away from reliance on major news producers. Americans' confidence in mainstream news has hit all-time lows (Gallup Poll, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2015). Young people from minoritized and low-income communities express low levels of trust in mainstream news and rely on social media to help them follow stories about issues they care about (Clark & Marchi, 2017; Cohen et al., 2012; Madden et al., 2017). Instead, legitimacy is also more closely tied to ones' personal and social relationships. Information about social issues and ideas is now defined, produced, and disseminated in specific networks of people (Bruns, 2005).

Studies suggest that young adults may be more likely to access and give legitimacy to information about social issues when they are shared by people they know on social media. A 2015 study found that millennials were drawn to news they may otherwise ignore when peers recommended and contextualized the story for them on social media (API, 2015). Another series of studies found that young people are more likely to assess the legitimacy of a news story on who shared it with them over who produced the story (Marchi & Clark, 2021; Clark & Marchi, 2017).

Social media has also amplified the power of emotional affect on critical reflection. When sharing stories or news of events on social media, people can increase awareness of an issue while also sharing their feelings. The emotional layer can foster trust awareness and

encourage involvement from others (Marchi & Clark, 2021). Papacharissi describes a two-part progression of "feeling their way into politics" (2014, p. 25). People develop a connection to the developing story by reading about and seeing others they know post about it. Then they become a part of the story by taking a stand and contributing their emotional declarations.

Social Media and Sociopolitical Action

As discussed in Chapter 1, social media has played an important role in several youth-led social movements over the past decade, such as the Arab Spring, The Occupy movement, #BLM, the Parkland students' March for Our Lives, and the 2019 global youth climate strikes. The relationship between social media and sociopolitical action is currently the most studied aspect of social media and SPD. Social media is increasingly being understood as an important civic space and place for public participation, particularly for youth who are disenfranchised from institutional structures like voting or serving in official positions (Mainsah, 2017; Jenkins et al., 2018; Kahne et al., 2015).

Social media's relationship with sociopolitical action, both online and offline, has been examined to some extent amongst youth and young adults. While the boundary between online and offline action is blurry due to the ubiquitous nature of social media in social life, some distinctions in the literature have been made. Offline, social media has impacted how young people engage with traditional or conventional political institutions, the way organizers communicate, and community-based organization strategy. Online, various approaches to digital action as a unique landscape of sociopolitical action have evolved.

Offline, the participatory nature of social media may have also impacted the way we engage with traditional or conventional sociopolitical structures (Fullam, 2017). With the growth of social media and other forms of digital media, more young people have been able to gain

experience with participatory culture; thus, there has been a growing interest in 'participatory politics' (Jenkins et al., 2016, 2018). Participatory politics refers to political action that is peer-based, interactive, non-hierarchical, and collective (Jenkins et al., 2009). As such, there has been increasing disinterest and trust in conventional action and more resistance to assimilating social change efforts into established political institutions or organizations.

Additionally, digital media has expanded how we communicate and how community organizing is approached, particularly collective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Through social media, people can communicate, build relationships, and make connections vital for organized and coordinated political action. Several studies have documented the ways that high school and college students have strategically used social media in their community-based organizing (Otero & Cammarota, 2011; Weiss, 2011; Yang, 2007).

Some have noted how social media has fostered a form of collective action called 'connective action,' in which networked communication enables individuals to personalize the expressions of a social movement's goals outside of conventional social movement organizations (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). This generative quality of connective action allows for various campaigns and struggles to build capacity around shared goals in a way that can possibly lead to more intersectional social movements. Some examples of connective action include dialoguing, on and offline, about their perspectives on social issues, circulating important information, producing new information outside of mainstream powers, and recruiting others in and beyond one's social network to take collective action (Kahne et al., 2014). In many ways, these connective action activities are nothing new in organizing, but social media allows for expanded ways of enacting them.

Some researchers have pointed to ways that social media and other digital technologies have made organizing faster and more efficient (Yang, 2007; Otero & Cammarota, 2011). For example, Yang (2007) demonstrated ways that single young people could use their social networks to broadly disseminate information and coordinate mass action around a shared message. Tuck and Yang (2014) and Weiss (2011) also pointed out that social media acts as a unique resource for young people to communicate with one another directly about ideas and coordinate activities outside of adult surveillance or counter-resistance. However, other scholars have pointed to ways that social media has not made organizing simpler, but rather that social media activism creates an illusion of spontaneity when in fact, there are deeper patterns of group behavior and ongoing heavy reliance on face-to-face relationships and organizing (Evans, 2013; McDonald et al., 2011; Shirky, 2011). As a result, youth community resistance that is facilitated with digital media may appear to be more spontaneous, reactive, or unorganized than it really is (Tuck and Yang, 2014).

Furthermore, Evans (2013) suggests that while social media is a powerful tool, its' power may be limited to communication and information dissemination. In their study of youth activism and Twitter use, they implicitly distinguish between online and offline relationships by asserting that social media "will never replace the core work of relationship building that is so central to grassroots organizing" (p.79). Youth organizers in a study by McDonald and colleagues (2011) agreed with this sentiment by asserting, "You still have to make a connection with people, and face-to-face discussions are still the best way to build relationships" (p. 44). However, social media was much less ingrained into daily life for youth in 2011 than it is today. The extent to which social media is a supplementary tool for transformation or a unique landscape for sociopolitical action itself remains unclear.

Social Media, Efficacy, Empowerment & Motivation

Social media has been linked to young people seeing themselves as powerful political agents, developing a civic imagination, and seeing themselves as part of a collective that can take effective action. However, social media has also been linked to several factors that can be detrimental to feelings of efficacy, empowerment, and motivation.

Young people who are new to the arena of politics may not consider themselves to be 'people who count,' but social media is opening doors for political activity (Dahlgren, 2016). Social media creates public spaces where young people can express themselves and participate in aspects of public life that help them feel like their views matter (Papacharissi, 2014). Additionally, young people who may not be politicized can “ feel their way into politics” (Papacharissi, 2014, p.25) when they share their emotions and life experiences online, and others bear witness or share in their anger over injustice. People can feel like they are a part of a struggle by reading about it and following it, and then they feel like they are contributing when they create or interact with content online (Papacharissi, 2014). While it is a separate question of whether feeling like one is contributing versus real engagement, it is important to note that social media create an access point for young people to develop their identity as someone who can and does make a difference in their communities.

Additionally, social media has been linked to an active civic imagination (Jenkins et al., 2016b). A civic imagination includes the capacity to imagine alternatives to current social, political, and economic conditions (Jenkins et al., 2016c). It is an important aspect of efficacy, empowerment, and motivation as, through social media, young people can integrate their private imaginations of a just society with others to create a public vision. Youth encourage each other to "imagine better" (p.295), and in the process, they share information, resources, and dialogue in

a way that builds capacity for social innovation. Jenkins and colleagues point to multiple examples of social movements, like the 1950s civil rights movement, that used Black church rhetoric and imagery to construct shared imaginations of entering the "promised land." This shared imagery was embedded into these movements in such a way that motivated people through struggle, acted as part of a cultural grounding for a movement, and also created a space for people to articulate what that promised land looked like, thereby laying down the path for movement strategy and collective action.

Feelings of empowerment can stem from emotional support and feeling connected to others online (Jenzen, 2017; Kelly, 2018; Zimmerman, 2016). Young people are passionate about finding their place in society, and social media allows them to express their personal identities and views, attract others who share similar experiences, and envision themselves as part of a collective (boyd, 2014). By engaging online with their peers, young people can begin to see themselves as part of a broader community that shares grievances (Clark & Marchi, 2017) and see possibilities for their collective skills and strength. In a study by Marchi & Clark (2021), they found that sharing sociopolitical content or opinions online can help young people see themselves as part of a collective and build a sense of collective efficacy in this way.

While these studies provide helpful insight into social media's positive role in efficacy, empowerment, and motivation, the link between social media and youth sociopolitical efficacy, empowerment, and motivation has not been widely examined. Other related studies on social media and broader youth development may provide relevant insight. For example, social media use has been linked to depression, anxiety, social ostracization, self-esteem, reinforcing stereotypes, and objectified self-concept in young people (Uhls et al., 2017; Subrahmanyam &

Smahel, 2011; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2016), all of which may counter core aspects of SPD such as psychological empowerment, political efficacy, and motivation.

Opportunity Structures and Social Media

In thinking about opportunity structures for youth SPD, social media may be an opportunity structure in and of itself. In political science, sociology, and communication, scholars have identified social media as an opportunity structure for social movements, particularly for mobilization, support/capacity for organizers, and political identity construction (Lopes, 2014; Schulz, 1998).

Social media is a core component of young people's social lives (boyd, 2014; Yang & Brown, 2013) and provides opportunities for young people to be a part of public life. Boyd (2014) points out that this can make some adults anxious for the same reasons that adults have always tried to limit youth participation. It more closely connects youth with the power they need to enact the changes they would like to see in their communities.

For other aspects of opportunity structures in youth SPD, social media allows youth to build community and bond with peers who share their experiences or beliefs (Ito et al., 2010; Ling 2007). Youth can use social media to build new peer or organizational affiliations, manage existing relationships and stay informed about sociopolitical activities within their social network (Lampe et al., 2006; Pempek et al., 2009). Social media may be an especially strong opportunity structure for mobilizing youth to action. Multiple studies have demonstrated that close personal networks have a strong influence on individual participation in offline and online collective actions (Bakardjieva, 2012; Biddix & Park, 2008; Fisher & Boekkooi, 2010; Harlow & Harp, 2012; Maireder & Schwarzenegger, 2011; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). Social media presents the opportunity for micro-mobilization, where people are solicited or invited by other individuals in

their networks to participate in a common cause. This invites more people to sociopolitical action while also sustaining ongoing collective action efforts (Nekmat et al., 2015; Ackerman et al., 2004)

Social Media and Sociocultural Factors

Scholars have demonstrated that social media can offer older youth and young adults an avenue to explore and express their racial, cultural, and different social identities (boyd, 2014; Buckingham, 2008). Exchanges of photographs, status updates, likes, comments, and messages, communities can bind communities together, but they can also include various forms of social anxiety, gatekeeping, and ostracization (Ellison et al., 2007; Pempek et al., 2009, Sosik & Bazarova, 2014; Subrahmanyam et al., 2008). This is particularly true for young people who seek social approval to reinforce their own sense of self and identity (Feinstein et al., 2013).

Social media both perpetuates and challenges oppressive narratives in mainstream media or education and makes way for folk knowledge and narratives to be more widely disseminated. For racially and socially marginalized youth, this can affect how they think about themselves and internalize or challenge those messages (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Additionally, people can construct their public image on social media through curated photos, text, imagery, and symbolism. They can highlight certain aspects of themselves and downplay others (Subrahmanyam et al., 2006). This individual self-concept derives, in part, from knowledge of and membership to social groups. Social media allows users to create profiles that articulate and display their list of friends who are also part of that same social and identity system. This can have positive and negative effects on exploring identity and building community. For example, on the one hand, young people can derive an increased sense of valuing oneself, belonging, and connection to a multitude of cultures. On the other hand, social media can exaggerate group

norms that reify reductive in-group/out-group associations based on curated imagery and appearance alone.

In a review of political resistance with racialized youth, Anyiwo and colleagues (2020) note the domain of digital action itself. Digital action refers to using digital media to provide counter-narratives, advocate for human rights, build a sense of community, share their stories and access a larger audience for their social message or their organizing efforts (Conner & Slattery, 2014; Reynolds & Mayweather, 2017; Carney, 2016; Gross, 2017). Some examples of digital action may be using hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter to facilitate public dialogue and challenge mainstream narratives about the murders of Black people by police (Anyiwo et al., 2020). While the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter led to profound sociopolitical action in the streets, the digital sphere was also a place of personal and public change.

Key Analytical Frameworks

The study design and analysis was influenced by Activity Theory, the Critical Youth perspective, and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) as an epistemology.

Activity Theory

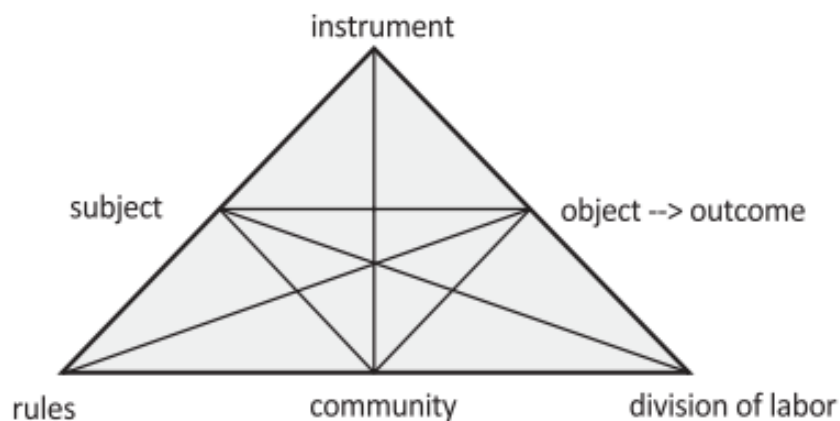
Activity theory, which stems from CHAT, serves as the analytical framework for the semi-structured interview protocols and chapter six of this dissertation. Activity systems analysis is designed to understand human activity situated within a collective context (Engeström, 1987; Kaptelinin, 2005). It is a descriptive tool for qualitative analysis that allows researchers to (1) capture change processes in a given context or system, (2) identify contradictions and tensions that shape development, and (3) demonstrate how development changes in time and context (Barab et al., 2004; Engrström, 2000; Yamagata-Lynch, 2007). In particular, it can be useful for approaching complicated phenomena so that processes are isolated and then systematically re-

integrated (Yamagata-Lynch, 2007). Within education, CHAT has proved to be a powerful tool for exploring complex development settings and bridging the gap between research and practice (Postholm & Vennebo, 2020). It has also been a central theoretical framework in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2012; Nardi 1996; Kuutti, 1996).

The CHAT is rooted in three core ideas: (1) humans act collectively, learn by doing and communicate in and via their actions, (2) humans make, employ and adapt tools of all kinds to learn and communicate, and (3) community is central to the process of making and interpreting meaning - and this to all forms of learning, communicating and acting (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2012). I adopt Engeström's model of collective activity (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory Model: adapted from Engeström (1987)



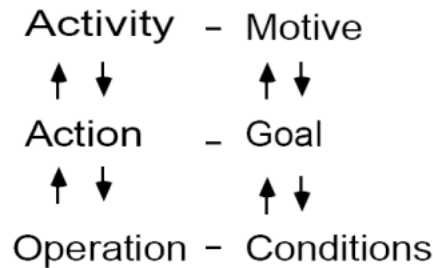
In this model, 'subject' refers to the individual or subgroup whose position and point of view are chosen as the perspective of analysis. 'Object' refers to the objective or the action that results from the components of the activity working together. In this dissertation, I will focus on

the key elements of sociopolitical development as the object. In the current literature this includes (1) critical reflection and consciousness, (2) empowerment, efficacy, and motivation, and (3) sociopolitical action. In Chapter 4 the YPAR collective will outline their key elements and how they operationalize those elements. Combined, these objectives are translated into SPD (the outcome). 'Community' refers to one's personal relationships and social group. 'Division of labor' refers to the horizontal division of tasks and the vertical division of power and social status. It also includes action that is interdependent on another individual or collective action. 'Instruments' refer to technologies, tools, signs, and symbols that either facilitate or limit activity (including language usage and technological medium), and 'rules' refers to the explicit and implicit regulations, social norms, conventions, standards and constraints of the activity system (Engeström & Sannino, 2010; Engeström, 2001).

There are five principles of activity theory (Sannino & Engrström, 2018). The first is that the unit of analysis is a collective, cultural artifact-mediated, and object-oriented activity system. Any single action is analyzed within a system of activity, and activity systems need to be seen in the context of their networked relationship to other activity systems. Activities are comprised of actions or chains of actions, and each action is comprised of operations. Each activity will have a motive, and each action will have a goal. Conditions will mediate operations. This relationship is visualized in Figure 3 (Leont'ev, 1981). Activity theory asserts that individual actions may be incomprehensible without observing the larger activity, and the nuance and subtleties of an activity may be lost if not examined in the context of other intersecting activity systems (Kuutti, 1996).

Figure 3

Leont'ev's Heirarchical Levels of Activity (1981).



The second principle is that activity systems are multi-voiced (Sannino & Engrström, 2018). There is always a community of diverse histories, multiple viewpoints, cultural practices, and interests within any activity system. That means there are a multitude of motivations, goals, and varying physical and sociocultural conditions that mediate operations. It also means that the various operations, actions, and activity systems influence one another and contribute to a collective system of activities. This is very relevant to the third principle, historicity. Activity systems are shaped and transformed over time.

The fourth principle is the centrality of contradictions as sources of change, learning, and development (Sannino & Engrström, 2018). Contradictions of activities seeds disturbance and conflict and innovation, and transformative change. The final principle is that as contradictions within an activity system are aggregated, participants begin to question and deviate from established cultural norms. This can lead to collaborative and collective change efforts between participants and between activity systems, leading to "expansive transformation" (Sannino & Engrström, 2018).

A key tenant of this model is that activity systems are constantly developing, and contradictions within an activity system drive this process. Contradictions are analyzed (1)

within each component, (2) between components, (3) between the activity system and its potential object and outcome, and (4) between one activity system (as a whole) and other activity systems (Engeström, 1987).

Critical Youth Perspective

Critical youth scholars recognize ‘youth’ as a socially constructed identity with social, economic, and political implications on young people’s lives (Sibley, 1995). In the U.S., the youth face many age-related social constraints, including age-related policies, age-related institutions, social constructions of youth, and relative powerlessness (Brooks & Riele, 2013). Youth do not typically yield significant sway or influence in the institutions and systems that impact their lives, like schools, families, religious institutions, and non-profits; mainstream U.S. culture both romanticizes and restricts the social power of youth, especially youth of color. As such, youth are seen as resilient, free, representing hope for the future, and having boundless potential – but also as dependent, vulnerable, needing to be saved, incompetent and violent (Lesko, 2012). These representations of young people shape the public consciousness and inform the decisions that impact their lives.

While there are undoubtedly some naturally occurring stages people experience as they age, human development is complex, non-linear, and influenced by an interaction of one's body, environment, and other historical and sociocultural factors (Lesko, 2012). The critical youth perspective rejects the idea that human learning and development is staged or unidirectional and instead theorized it to be socially and culturally situated (Austin & Willard, 1998; Vadeboncoeur & Stevens, 2005). In doing so, they also reject the notion that youth are in the process of developing their personhood and recognize the powerful agency children and adolescents already have in their lives and societies.

Youth Participatory Action Research

This dissertation is guided by participatory action research as an epistemology. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is an approach to knowledge production that seeks to understand the world by transforming it. PAR is not a specific set of methodologies but rather an epistemological commitment (Torre, 2014) and an embedded critique of colonization, racism, homophobia, classism, misogyny, and xenophobia in society, our research, and ourselves (Tuck et al., 2008). In contrast to "traditional" approaches, PAR: (1) understands "expert validity" and "construct validity" to live with people who experience oppression, and not just those who have gained knowledge through professional training alone, (2) is not conducted by lone investigators, but rather by a collective of "insiders" and stakeholders, (3) centers issues of power and oppression in subject matter, and process and (4) understands knowledge production as being inextricably linked to interacting with the world around us (Camarota & Fine, 2008).

This approach to knowledge stems from a rich history of critical activist-scholars. Amongst those were W.E.B. Du Bois, Kurt Lewin, and Paolo Freire (Torre et al., 2012). In the late 1800s, W.E.B. Du Bois challenged how social science locates social problems as being within African American and Black communities rather than on the living conditions and social structures created by racism and poverty. He demonstrated that empirical research is strengthened when combined with a structural analysis (Torre et al., 2012). As a result of his work, an analysis of power and oppression is foundational to any empirical PAR study.

In the 1940s, Kurt Lewin and colleagues established the Center for Community Interrelations (CCI), where they developed a method for communities to conduct research to inform political strategies and organizing efforts. In doing so, they presented possibilities for democratizing how knowledge was produced (Lewin, 1946) and made explicit the power of

research in organizing. Their work shaped PAR's commitment to critical socio-political action and helped articulate research's relationship to social change. Paulo Freire's emancipatory interpretations of praxis and critical consciousness (1970) were influential. Freire posits that human consciousness shapes the material world as much as the material world shapes the way we think and are. As such, action and reflection are mutually constitutive, and "*reflection without action is sheer verbalism or armchair revolution, and action without reflection is pure activism or action for action's sake*" (Freire, 1972, p.41). These theories are reflected in PAR's dual commitment to critical consciousness development for individuals throughout the PAR process, as well as PAR's commitment to transforming the political, social, and physical world. Finally, feminist, critical race, decolonial, queer, critical disability, neo-Marxist, and poststructural social movements over the past century have continued to shape our understanding and practice of PAR. These movements have translated these theories or academic practices into grassroots organizing and campaign strategy and by doing so have helped to inform and transform PAR epistemology and methodology over the years.

In the case of PAR with youth (YPAR), participatory inquiry approaches acknowledge that children and young people make up a social and political class that, despite being a significant portion of our population, are pushed to the margins when it comes to meaningful decision-making on the research and policy decisions that impact their lives (Camino & Zeldin, 2002; Langhout & Thomas, 2010). YPAR acknowledges youth as a socially marginalized identity and positions them as experts of their lived experience and acknowledges them as critical social change-makers.

As a result of YPAR, youth gain a broader and deeper awareness of social justice issues and are given opportunities to form an understanding of themselves in relation to the social

world. This includes developing their political power and potential for being change agents (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017). The YPAR process also facilitates relationship-building between youth, youth and adults, and their broader communities. YPAR forms new outlets for the voices of children and youth to participate in community issues, creates a platform for intergenerational dialogue, raises community awareness by offering a perspective often missing from dominant narratives and the individual skill development of youth and adult researchers acts as a community resource and builds capacity for longer-term change (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017).

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Chapter 3: Research Design & Methodology

Rationale for Current Research

Social media is an integral part of youth social, emotional, and political development, yet is a largely under-explored factor in youth SPD (Bañales et al., 2020; Diemer et al., 2017; Duggan & Brenner, 2013). Furthermore, much of what has been studied has compartmentalized the key elements of SPD (critical consciousness, critical action, efficacy, etc.), but very few studies have explored the way the deeply interconnected processes work together to influence sociopolitical development as a holistic process. Our understanding of adolescents' experiences with technology shapes how adults support youth SPD across various education, community, and health service settings. This includes how families, service providers, and educators relate to youth, the policies that can contain and restrict youth behavior, and how we teach and mentor the next generation.

This exploratory study aims to support theory-building and inform intervention development by more closely examining how social media interacts with youth SPD with youth as co-investigators. I aim to illuminate how young community organizers with diverse racial and social identities and varying levels of sociopolitical development experience tensions and contradictions of activity within their activity systems. With a better understanding of social media's relationship to youth SPD, we can better integrate social media as a protective and promotive tool in various youth education and intervention contexts while also working to mitigate the adverse effects of social media on youth SPD. This supports the healthy development of youth and helps build stronger intergenerational social movements.

While there are some insights we can draw from the existing scholarship on the relationship of social media with aspects of young adult SPD, the adolescent experience is distinct in several ways. First, youth under the age of 18 are often disenfranchised and are restricted from other forms of public, political, and civic life. The repression of sociopolitical participation and decision-making is particularly profound for youth who are also marginalized for their racial, ethnic, and other social identities. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, social media has afforded youth new ways of engaging in sociopolitical life. Second, while development is not a staged or linear process, adolescents are influenced by different bio-psycho-social factors than adults. In adolescence, many young people experience more opportunities for self-directed learning, seek greater autonomy, engage in deeper exploration of their role in a community, and add more emphasis on understanding and being responsive to the perspectives of their peers (Lam et al., 2014; Dumontheil et al., 2010; Dahl, 2018).

Third, social media has been integrated into adolescents' lives from an earlier age than previous generations, and therefore has been more integrated into their ways of interacting with the social world. Social media started becoming integrated into social life in the early to mid 2000s. So, adolescents today have grown up in an environment where social media is a ubiquitous aspect of social life for most. Furthermore, a 2018 survey found that 95% of teens aged 13-18 had a smartphone, with 45% of them saying that they are online on a "near-constant basis" (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). So the pervasiveness of social media in adolescents' daily interactions is much more than in previous generations.

And finally, social media platforms are dynamic and are influenced by both program design and consumer use. The popularity of platforms changes over a relatively short period of time, which can make it difficult to critically examine social media instruments, practices, and norms.

Also the companies that design and operate the various social media platforms use algorithms to continuously optimize the way they are capturing the attention of users and increasing engagement (Vuorre et al., 2021; Lewis, 2017; Solon, 2017). This means the design, features, and apps are constantly changing, sometimes even in small ways, that have a significant impact on how youth interact with one another and with the platform. This study focuses on the youth, or social media user, experience and how youth make meaning of that experience. By focusing on the way that youth derive meaning from their online interactions, I hope to capture insights that withstand the continuous changes between and within social media platforms.

Research Questions

There are two research questions that guided this dissertation: (1) In what ways can social media facilitate youth SPD?, and (2) In what ways can social media limit, or act counterproductive to, SPD? By answering these questions, we may be able to more intentionally mitigate the adverse effects of social media on young peoples' critical consciousness, capacity-building, and organizing, while also developing research-based strategies for strengthening the use of social media in youth-led movements.

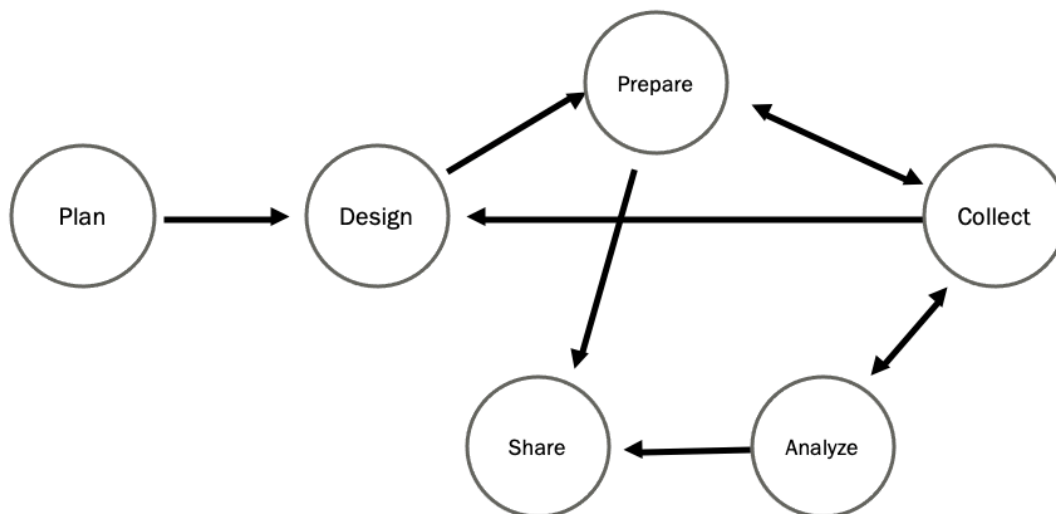
Research Methods & Study Design

This study is a multiple case study using photovoice. A case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within real-world contexts (Yin, 2018). Case study designs are well suited for issues of practice where contextual conditions are pertinent to understanding the phenomenon and incorporate information-rich sources (Yin & Davis, 2007; Merriam, 1998). This facilitates the adoption of findings into policy or practice change and can help uncover reasons for complicated cause-and-effect relationships (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Activity theory reminds us that multi-voicedness offers important insights into understanding the process of learning and development. Thus, conducting multiple case studies with young people who vary in age, SPD experience, race, ethnicity, and gender will allow this exploratory study to balance breadth and depth to the guiding research question. Figure 4 demonstrates that case study research is a linear but iterative process (Yin, 2018). The methodology of this dissertation will be organized by this framework. In the following sections I outline the phases of: (1) Design, (2) Prepare (3) Collect, (4) Analyze and (5) Share. After discussing each phase, I outline some modifications that were made due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a facilitator positionality statement and a discussion of ethical considerations.

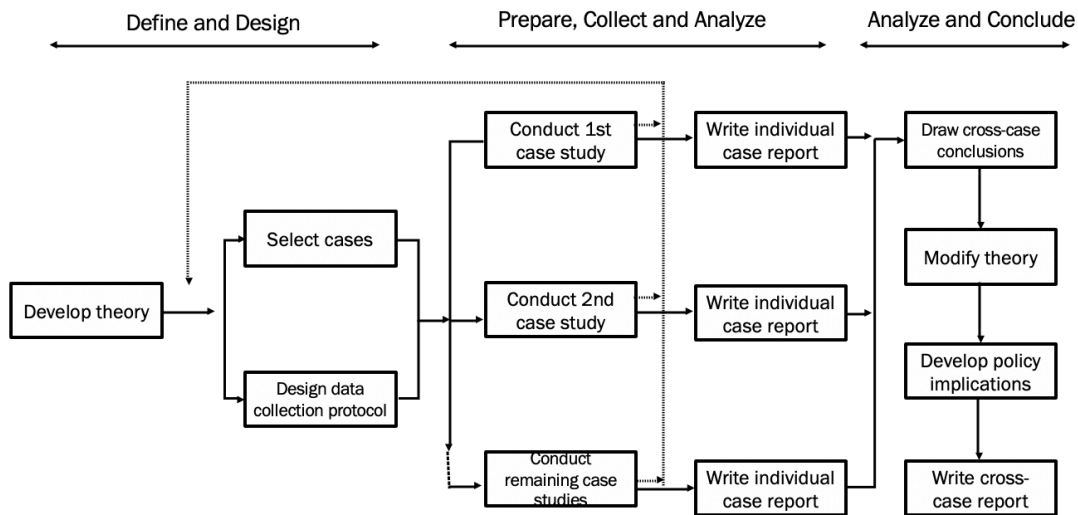
Figure 4

Overview of Case Study Research Design



Design

I selected a multiple-site case study design (n=12) that utilized photovoice methodology. Figure 5 outlines the multiple case study procedure by Yin (2018). The basic development of the study was informed by the literature and guiding theories discussed in the previous chapter.

Figure 5*Multiple-Case Study Procedure (Yin, 2018)****Recruitment and Case Selection***

I defined the cases as individuals with varying sociopolitical experiences, sociocultural identities and sociopolitical engagement. To recruit for this study, the facilitator created an electronic flyer recruiting young people ages 13-19 interested in learning about social media's role in youth organizing. The flyer was distributed electronically across youth development and youth empowerment programs, local youth advisory councils, local school counselors, school student-run clubs, and social media through direct messages to various local youth-led community organizations in the greater Seattle area. Youth filled out an application, which asked them to report some basic demographic information, describe their community engagement, what social justice issues are important to them and why they wanted to participate in the study. Once a few youth researchers were enrolled, they were invited to recruit others they thought would be a good fit for the project.

Twenty-five qualifying young people applied. Youth participants were selected for diversity in age, race, gender, sexuality, ability, neighborhood, and level of community/civic engagement. Fifteen young people were invited to participate, and twelve young people enrolled in the project.

Participant-Researcher or Case Characteristics

Twelve youth participated in the overall case study, and eleven participated as co-researchers in the photovoice project. One young person opted not to collect any social media data because they recently deleted social media for mental health reasons. This co-researcher participated in all other aspects of research, including interviews, analysis, and discussion of results. A detailed table of youth identities and social media use is included in Appendix A but is summarized below.

All youth self-identified as being committed to specific social justice movements or causes and socio-politically active somehow, though the level of community engagement or sociopolitical activity varied. About five young people were very active and experienced in organizing organizations or political campaigns. Six young people were either not currently active or somewhat active in organizing or local social justice work. Social issues that were important to youth included: climate change, racial injustice and anti-racism, housing justice, prison & police abolition, anti-capitalism, trans liberation feminism, and more. All but one youth were involved in at least one social or community organization (online or offline). Five youth were involved in three or more social or community organizations.

The ages of youth co-researchers ranged from 14 to 19 years, with an average of 16. First languages included English, Spanish, Cantonese, Somali and Vietnamese. Six youth came from middle-class families, and five identified as coming from working-class or poor families. Three

young people live with a disability or identify as disabled. Genders include cis women (n=6), transmasculine (n=1), gender fluid (n=1), non-binary (n=2) and cis men (n=2). Races, as reported in their own words, include Asian (n=3), biracial AfroLatina (n=1), white (n=3), Black (n=2), white Latine (n=1) multiracial: Black, white & Desi (n=1) and biracial Asian & white (n=1).

The typical number of hours per day spent on social media ranged from three to nine hours, averaging 4.5 hours. Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube were the most popular social media platforms. One youth posts or creates content less than one time per week. Five youth post or create content 1-3 times per week. One posts/creates content 4-7 times per week. Three create content multiple times per day, most days. Two youth never create or post social media content.

Prepare

In the preparation phase, I reviewed case study and photovoice methodology, screened and trained the YPAR collective on photovoice methods and research ethics, and developed facilitation protocols (for photovoice and semi-structured interviews). I also programmed survey instruments and online photovoice submission site into RedCap.

Training of Participant-Researchers

In June 2021, all enrolled youth co-researchers attended an orientation and training. We discussed our shared goals for the project, constructed and clarified our guiding research questions, discussed logistics, and completed training on capturing and collecting social media images and videos. We also conducted a workshop on ethics and data privacy. We developed strategies for ensuring that personal and identifying information was protected, including the identifying information of other people (potential indirect participants) they may observe on social media. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Collect

In the collect phase, I collected multiple forms of confidential data (i.e., interview, survey, observation, artifact) over six months. The youth participant-researchers collected data using the photovoice methodology for three of those months. Data collection and analysis happened simultaneously with each participant researcher. Data sources included photovoice, surveys, recorded interviews and dialogue, some observation, and reflexive memos.

Photovoice

Photovoice is a PAR process where people document their experience through photos and then critically reflect on and discuss those photos to promote positive change in their communities (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 1999). As a methodology, it is founded on feminist and critical principles and is cited as a tool for critical consciousness development (Wang et al., 2000; Wang & Hannes, 2020), one of the key elements of youth sociopolitical development. It is also a process of developing critical consciousness in and of itself (Carlson et al., 2006).

Visual research methods incorporate still or moving images to collect data, analyze it and disseminate research findings (Rose, 2014). When paired with narratives, images offer a unique way of describing everyday activities and people's understandings of space, place, and relationships (Wang & Hannes, 2020). Visual research methods are valuable tools for opening up critical dialogue, allow for multiple ways of knowing and sensing to be incorporated (i.e., memory, emotion, sensory), and allows participants to take the role of an expert of their own experience (Roberts, 2011; Happer, 2002; Riddett-Moore & Siegesmund, 2012; Pauwels, 2015). This study employs a modified version of the Photovoice method, first introduced by Wang & Burris (1994). The key assumptions are: (1) images contribute to how we see ourselves, how we define and relate to the world and what we perceive as significant or different, (2) pictures can be

a powerful tool for influencing policy or enacting social change), and (3) people have a right to participate in creating and defining the images that shape policy (Wang, 1999; Hall, 1977; Mukerji & Schudson, 1991).

Caroline Wang (1999) identified a three-pronged approach to understanding and analyzing images: “(1) the production of the images, (2) the reception of the images and meanings attributed to them by audiences, and (3) the content of the images themselves” (p. 186). Photovoice includes a series of procedures: (1) recruitment and selection of community leaders, (2) recruitment of photovoice participants, (3) the introduction of the methodology to participants, (4) obtaining informed consent, (5) posing an initial theme for creating/collecting images, (6) distributing necessary technology & resources, (7) providing time for participants to collect/create images, (8) meet to discuss images and (9) disseminate/distribute research (Wang, 1999; 2006).

Photovoice submissions came in still images of posts, screenshots, and video or screen recording format. Along with each submission, participant-researchers also filled out a written reflection, guided by the analytical questions posed by Wang (1999) and Wang & Hannes (2020). The following describes each source in more detail. The protocols, photovoice instructions, and surveys can be found in the appendix.

Collection of Posts, Screenshots & Videos

Over eight weeks, each participant-researcher collected screenshots of social media posts, downloaded videos or captured screen recordings of their social media activity. To provide some structure and ensure a diversity of data, the facilitator instructed the young co-researchers to submit three photovoice submissions per week that they felt provided insight into our key

research questions. Participant-researchers de-identified their data to the best of their ability and submitted their photovoice submissions into RedCap.

Surveys & Written Reflections

In total, there were three surveys or written reflections used throughout the study: the identity wheel reflection, the social media use survey, and the photovoice submission written reflection.

Identity Wheel Activity Written Reflection. After orientation and training, but before any of the interviews were conducted, each participant-researcher completed a reflective activity based on the University of Michigan's LSA Inclusive Teaching Initiative's Social Identity Wheel (n.d.) and Spectrum Activity Questions (n.d.). These activities are designed to help people reflect on the relationships between their personal and social identities. It provided useful insight into how the young participant-researchers thought of or related to their racial, ethnic, gender, class, ability, spiritual, and other important identities. This was completed in RedCap and discussed further during the first interview. A copy of the RedCap prompts is attached as Appendix G.

Social Media Use Survey. At the beginning of the project, each participant-researcher completed a short survey about their social media use. The survey collected information about their average recorded screen time, app preference, how often they create content, an estimate of how much of their content is sociopolitical in nature, and some of the questions they would like to be addressed in this research project.

Photovoice Written Reflection. With each photovoice submission, the participant-researchers completed a written reflection via RedCap (Appendix F). The writing prompts were inspired by the 'SHOWeD' framework (Wang, 1999, p. 188; Wallerstein, 1987) for analyzing photovoice posts. The written reflections emphasized the following of this framework (1) What

do you see here? (2) How does this post relate to critical consciousness or organizing? and (3) Why do you think this post is so impactful (positively or negatively)?

Interviews

In total, there were five meetings across six months. These meetings consisted of semi-structured interviews and open dialogue about emerging issues or ideas. All interviews and discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed, and included as data in our analysis. Before the photovoice portion of the study began, the facilitator met with each participant-researcher to discuss their ideas, theories, and experiences with sociopolitical development. We discussed their conceptualizations of critical consciousness, sociopolitical action, and capacity-building for social justice work. We also discussed the online and offline factors they feel most contribute to or limit their sociopolitical development.

The second meeting utilized a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix B). It focused on the youth-community-object triangle in the activity system model. Particularly it emphasized: (1) learning about the young people's identities, their perspective of self, their social values and political attitudes, (2) learning about parts of their offline ecosystem that influences their sociopolitical development, and (3) learning about young people's social media construction of sociopolitical self. The third meeting used a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix C) and focused on issues of social media and sociopolitical action and factors related to the effect of current events of Black Lives Matter and the COVID-19 pandemic. The fourth meeting partially utilized a semi-structured protocol (Appendix D) to facilitate a first-order analysis of youth photovoice submissions, but about half of the time was an unstructured dialogue about emerging issues. The fifth meeting focused on finishing the analysis, identifying recommendations for

action based on our results, and reflecting on the process as a whole. This protocol is all included in Appendix E.

Observation

I observed publicly available social media posts that youth researchers referenced in the discussions. I took field notes on the publicly available posts as well. This data source primarily served as a source of triangulation.

Analyze

Photovoice

In her seminal paper on photovoice methodology, Wang outlines the SHOWeD framework for analysis in photovoice. First, co-researchers select the images that they feel are most significant. Then, co-researchers use a critical lens to contextualize and frame stories about their pictures. Wang developed a series of questions to facilitate critical reflection and dialogue using the acronym SHOWeD: (1) What do you See here?, (2) What is really Happening here?, (3) How does this relate to Our lives? (4) Why does this situation, concern, or strength exist? (5) What can we Do about it? (Wang, 1999, p. 188; Wallerstein, 1987). This accessible framework has been widely adopted for photovoice analysis. However, Qingchun Wang & Karin Hannes (2020) illuminated ways that many photovoice studies overemphasize the narrative provided by participant-researchers, which undermines the potential of examining the production of the images and the photos themselves. Furthermore, they point out how the analysis is often limited to the interpretive phase. To address these methodological issues, they offer a framework for analyzing photovoice data that pays particular attention to these dimensions while still maintaining the methodology's critical and empowerment commitments. In this approach, they center their analytical gaze at the sites of production, the photo, and the audience (or

dissemination). Analysis at each site is divided into pre-production (planning and preparation for taking pictures) and production (the actual shooting of photos in the field). Within each stage of production, there are three modalities to consider: technological, compositional, and social.

This paper takes both the SHOWeD and Wang & Hannes analytical framework into account. The guiding analytical questions posed by Caroline Wang (1999) and Qingchun Wang & Karin Hannes (2020) were modified for the context of analyzing social media artifacts as photos or images. The facilitator and youth co-researcher met to identify and discuss the issues, themes, and theories that emerged in their data. Some analytical questions were integrated into the photovoice written reflection (outlined above). Others were integrated into data analysis meetings between each participant-researcher and the facilitator. These meetings combined a semi-structured interview protocol using prompts from Wang (1999) and Wang & Hannes (2020) and unstructured dialogue driven by the emerging themes and questions raised by the young people. These meetings were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Codifying Issues, Themes, and Theories

The facilitator synthesized the data from the recordings and transcripts into issues, themes, and theories using in vivo coding. This approach emphasizes the actual spoken words of the participants themselves (Strauss, 1987) and is particularly useful for highlighting the voices of youth in the research process itself (Saldana, 2021). As a result, in vivo coding can incorporate 'folk' or 'indigenous' terms, which is the participant-generated language that speaks to particular cultural ideas and practices within a community (McCurdy et al., 2005). It is also well aligned to participatory action research methodologies such as photovoice since the approach relies on participant-researchers to give meaning to the data (Saldana, 2021; Coghlan & Brannick, 2014; Fox, Martin & Green, 2007; Stringer, 2014).

In Vivo, coding is foundational to the first stage of a grounded theory analytic approach (Saldana, 2021). The goal of initial coding is to “remain open to all possible theoretical directions” suggested by the interpretations of the data (Charmaz, 2014). A line-by-line approach was used (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). After completing initial coding for all transcripts, surveys, and written reflections, the facilitator organized the in vivo codes into categories based on processes for each participant-researcher.

This process was conducted two times. The first analysis was aimed at the question: How do adolescent community organizers with varying social and political experiences conceptualize youth sociopolitical development? The results of this analysis are shared in Chapter Four and serve as a conceptual anchor to the photovoice project.

The second analysis was aimed at the overarching research question for this dissertation: (1) In what ways does social media facilitate youth sociopolitical development, and (2) in what ways does social media limit, or even act counterproductive to, youth sociopolitical development? The in vivo generated categories were then organized into categories of 'helping' or 'hurting' youth sociopolitical development. Examples included "using entertainment and creativity to spread messages or help people learn" and "making things easier to organize."

For each analysis, the facilitator brought a basic map of in vivo codes to each participant-researcher (see Anfara, 2008 for more on mapping qualitative data). At this point, the facilitator and participant-researcher conducted second-order coding together. We discussed which codes spoke to similar ideas and which codes seemed to be in conflict or contradiction with one another.

Then, the facilitator organized the key codes across all 11 participant-researchers and presented this map of code categories, with examples of each to each young person. This allowed

the participant-researchers to speak to each other's findings and build off one another's analysis in a confidential way. Each discussion took about 1 to 1.5 hours and was audio-recorded and transcribed.

Trustworthiness & Methodological Rigor

Visual images, videos, written reflections, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured dialogues were all included in the study. This diversity of sources allowed us to triangulate data and offer nuance to emerging ideas or themes. The participatory design of the study can also enrich the trustworthiness of the research process. The young people who served as participant-researchers hold uniquely relevant knowledge in the area of inquiry. As the data collection and analysis evolved, the facilitator regularly de-briefed with the participant-researchers and checked preliminary analysis and results with all YPAR collective members individually. Any misinterpretations or mischaracterizations were corrected during the initial coding when organizing the in vivo codes and reviewed again during second-order coding. Each participant-researcher confirmed that the case reports generated for them using their analysis were complete and representative of their thoughts and experiences. After each meeting or interview, the facilitator completed a reflexive memo and an analytical memo. More on the facilitator's reflexivity and positionality is described below.

Modifications for COVID-19 Pandemic

There were also some modifications to the photovoice process due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the entire data planning and collection periods, including the IRB approval of the study, in-person meetings were not possible. All recruitment, training, data collection, analysis, and action planning were done virtually. All research activities took place

using a virtual meeting platform where they were audio-recorded, and a preliminary transcript was produced.

Young co-researchers were invited to collect screenshots or recordings of the social media landscape. This included posts, textual exchanges, messages, videos, and more. Collecting social media images is different from collecting photographic images in several ways. First, there is a diversity of technologies from which participant-researchers can create and disseminate their images, and these technologies co-exist as part of a larger web or network. For example, videos can be created using TikTok but shared directly with Instagram and become a part of an Instagram reel. These images can be reproduced exactly as the original creator intended or modified and reproduced with multiple creators' perspectives being represented. I adapted the photovoice approach to be responsive to the diversity of digital media formats and symbology (e.g., integrated text, hashtags, images, audio, video).

Facilitator Reflexivity & Positionality

The author of this dissertation directed and implemented all aspects of research design, data collection, analysis, and writing. She was also the primary facilitator of the photovoice process. She is a doctoral student in a school of social work at a large research university in the Pacific Northwest. She has facilitated youth participatory action research (YPAR) for over eight years and is trained in various qualitative research approaches. She has also been a community organizer in various community settings. This has included work with organizations, grassroots coalitions, and mass actions/protests. She also has over ten years of experience working directly with middle and high school-age youth on social, emotional, and political development.

Her position as a facilitator shaped the base conceptualization of the project and influenced the research process. Concerning social identity, she is a 32-year-old cisgender

woman. She is white and ethnically Italian-American. She comes from a working-class background in a rustbelt city but has lived in the pacific northwest for over 10 years.

There were certain instances in this project where she held an insider-outsider status. She began exploring her own sociopolitical identity and ideas when she was around the same age as the young co-researchers by joining grassroots political organizations. These social and learning spaces were very influential on her sociopolitical development. A handful of the participant-researchers described experiences and feelings that felt familiar and activated memories of her own experiences. She shared gender identity with about half of the young people, which was most salient when the cis young women discussed sexism, patriarchy, and gender-based power dynamics in their social media photovoice posts. She was also very embedded in local organizations and movements. Thus, she was familiar with many local events, incidents, social dynamics, organizations, and local figures referred to by youth co-researchers. Her working-class background provided some insider knowledge into some of the young co-researchers' reflections on the accessibility of critical information and learning outside of academic contexts and some issues of inaccessibility described in the results.

She was an outsider in the knowledge creation process in almost every other regard. While she is a first-generation college student from a working-class home, she is currently embedded in a research-intensive academic institution. Also, while she had an experience of sociopolitical development in her youth, she is currently thirteen to eighteen years older than the young co-researchers, and social media was not as deeply embedded into day-to-day life in her late adolescence. She is a white cisgender woman and therefore lacks insider knowledge of the experiences of youth of color trans and non-binary youth. Her dominant identities were most salient in discussions of race, racism, anti-racism movements, and exposure to racist violence

online. When youth integrate their intersectional knowledge and perspectives into our data analysis, she undoubtedly fails to capture all the nuance, complexity, and inarticulable truths expressed by the participant-researchers. To help mitigate the limitations of her experiential knowledge and its' influence on the inquiry process, she used in-vivo coding, completed reflexive memos throughout the project, and consistently checked in with the youth co-researchers to address misunderstandings and misrepresentations of their ideas.

Ethical Considerations

Finally, the social media landscape in the photovoice study posed some important ethical considerations, namely concerns around confidentiality and consent of indirect participants. There are multiple forms of identifying information on social media, such as the usernames and handles of the creator, and those who engaged with the posts through liking or commenting. This introduces the possibility of indirect research participants and particularly indirect youth participants. The facilitator conducted a research ethics workshop with each young co-researcher to address these concerns. We discussed the importance of informed consent, confidentiality, and risk. For each post or screenshot submitted, youth participant-researchers used editing software on their phones to block out names, usernames, and handles. For any identifying information that youth co-researchers may have missed (particularly videos submitted), the facilitator edited out identifying information before storing the data. Additionally, some images created by the participant-researchers contain context clues that could identify the youth researcher or people outside of this study. In those cases, the posts are described qualitatively by the youth researcher but never displayed to other youth co-researchers or in this manuscript.

This project takes seriously the ethical commitment of power-sharing. Youth co-researchers were co-directors of their own inquiry processes. As a facilitator I developed

activities and prompts to help move the process along, but youth were routinely encouraged to adapt the process as needed. The research question was developed and refined as a collective, and youth defined the scope of data collection themselves. All summaries and interpretations made by the facilitator were explicitly confirmed and/or corrected with each young co-researcher at multiple points throughout the research process.

As a collective, we also worked to challenge oppression in the research process and in ourselves. As a facilitator, I would reflexively memo about my experiences and critically reflect on the influence of my positionalities on the research process itself. The youth co-researchers also would routinely reflect, some in written form and some aloud through guided reflection prompts. In discussions about the young co-researchers' experiences with discrimination, oppression and resilience, extra care and attention was paid to honoring the young people's words by using in-vivo coding and approval processes for all written representations of their words. On multiple occasions, youth researchers corrected or pushed back against discussions of their ideas by the facilitator or other youth co-researchers. In the case of disagreement amongst youth, their critical engagement with the ideas was recorded and used to highlight the nuance and diversities of perspectives within 'marginalized youth' experience. The methodology of photovoice also encourages critical examination of the self, and of our environments. As such, the youth co-researchers and I each reflected on the way the inquiry process impacted our own critical reflections and actions. Some of this will be shared in the last chapter of this dissertation.

Overview of Results

The overall project used a variety of rich data sources to illuminate quite a few important themes, issues and ideas. This dissertation outlines four of the results from the participatory multi-site case study.

Result 1: Chapter four outlines the results of some of the foundational theoretical work the YPAR collective took on. Using participatory research methods we developed a community-based conceptualization of youth sociopolitical development as a construct.

This definition serves as an anchor for the YPAR collective as we proceeded to collect and analyze data throughout the project. Results two and three highlight two of the key tensions, conflicts, and contradictions in the relationship between social media and youth sociopolitical development. The following results are being highlighted because they were among the most foundational and prevalent ideas that youth explored.

Result 2: Chapter five focuses on the ways that social media increases accessibility in ways that are important for youth SPD, but also contributes to gatekeeping and unhealthy boundary setting in ways that limit or even hurt youth SPD.

Result 3: Chapter six focuses on some of the ways that the YPAR collective saw social media deepening critical awareness and analysis, but also contributing to the oversimplification of ideas, the reduction of identities and the production of echo chambers.

The dissertation closes with a discussion of the more significant implications of this study for research and practice and identifies future directions for research.

The terms participant-researcher, youth co-researcher and co-researcher are used interchangeably to refer to the youth members of the YPAR collective. The term facilitator refers to me, the author of this dissertation. When possible, specific ideas offered by specific researchers will be credited to the individual youth. Each youth co-researcher is referred to by

two initials. The initials were selected to maintain youth confidentiality and are not their real initials. The young co-researchers' positionalities and sociopolitical experiences shape their theories, influence data collection, and analysis. Each youth researcher will be introduced by the assigned initials and a footnote with some aspects of their identities that they cited as being important to their viewpoint. After their first introduction, a review of youth positionality can be found in Appendix A.

Share

The results from this multi-site case study with a virtual photovoice methodology are being shared in multiple arenas. Youth co-researchers have shared their insights with other people in their families and communities. At an organizational and community level, I am developing a short practice guide for educators and youth service providers based on youth suggestions for adult intervention. The results of this project are shared with the research community, and field at large, through this dissertation and subsequent published articles.

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Chapter 4: Youth Conceptualizations of Sociopolitical Development

This chapter outlines the results of the YPAR collective's conceptualization of youth sociopolitical development. The specific research question that guided our inquiry and analysis for this chapter was: *How do adolescent community organizers with varying social and political experiences conceptualize youth sociopolitical development?*

As part of the virtual photovoice project, the YPAR co-researchers discussed their conceptualizations of youth sociopolitical development. This served multiple purposes. First, it served as an anchor to the photovoice study, making the grounded theoretical assumptions of the youth co-researchers more visible. This enriches the inquiry process and contextualizes their data collection decisions and analysis. Second, this contributes to the literature by offering a conceptual definition of youth sociopolitical development rooted in the lived experiences of young people with multiple marginalized positionalities, who are committed to social justice in different ways.

Review of Analytic Approach

As described in Chapter 3, I used a line-by-line grounded theory approach to analyze the young co-researchers' conceptualizations of youth sociopolitical development. After the initial round of coding, we had 113 distinct in vivo codes. While all the concepts are interrelated, the facilitator organized the codes into sets of factors that had similar essential qualities. These codes were related to 'critical consciousness,' 'critical action,' and 'other' ideas. Within the 'other' category, youth identified several 'social' and 'emotional' factors of youth SPD. Sociocultural factors (i.e., issues of race, power, privilege, and oppression) were embedded within all of these domains.

At that point, the facilitator worked with each young person to conduct a second order of analysis. We lumped the codes that we felt were speaking to similar ideas into piles. The facilitator asked the participants, 'what is one idea or set of words that you think this pile is getting at?' This was done with each young person individually. Then the facilitator synthesized the categories constructed by youth to present one working definition. This definition was presented to each young person to ensure that it captured their ideas, and we made any final edits. This chapter outlines the results of this work.

Results

The youth-driven conceptualization of critical consciousness and critical action was generally well-aligned to existing literature definitions and conceptual models. However, the young people identified more social and emotional factors of SPD and emphasized operationalizations of critical consciousness and action practices that are not commonly examined in existing SPD conceptual frameworks. All of the domains were rooted in sociocultural factors and a consideration of experiences with race, power, privilege and oppression. For critical consciousness, the YPAR collective emphasized the practice of proactively learning about social issues, learning about oneself, and being open to new and conflicting information. For critical action, the collective emphasized self-care and self-love as sociopolitical acts, accountability, and developing skills for mobilization and organization. Concerning efficacy, empowerment, and motivation, this aspect was less emphasized by the youth co-researchers. However, they did identify the domain of developing a sustained commitment to social justice. Their conceptualization of critical consciousness and action is outlined in the first two sections of this chapter. Expanding on the existing literature, the youth co-researchers also emphasized a series of social and emotional factors of youth SPD. These

included practices around communication and dialogue, setting boundaries, the strength of relationships, empathy, and perspective-taking, centering identity. These ideas are outlined in the third section of this chapter but are deeply interrelated to critical consciousness and action. They also identified a series of factors related to the idea of opportunity structures in the existing literature. Table 2 summarizes these SPD domains, core constructs, and operational themes in constructing a youth SPD definition. Following the table, each theme is discussed.

Table 2
Summary of Youth Operationalization of SPD

SPD Domains	Constructs	Operational Themes
Critical Consciousness	Increasing social awareness	Proactively learning about social issues Proactively learning about yourself
	Critical self-awareness	Learning critical perspectives on lived experience Being grounded in ones' identity Developing moral ideas & motivations Being transparent with others
	Critical analysis	Connecting experiential with learned knowledge Learning histories of social issues and social movements Building a shared language for dialogue for talking about lived experience & critical theory Learning about how social issues are interconnected
	Openness to new information & humility	Being open to new and conflicting or contradictory information Humility/challenging ego Learning in community dialogue
Critical Action	Self-care & Self-Love	Self-care & self-love for marginalized youth as an act of resistance
	Accountability	Self-accountability Facilitating accountability with others
	Advocacy	Self-advocacy Advocating for issues in ones' immediate and/or broader communities
	Skills for Mobilization & Organization	Being able to coordinate collective actions
SPD Domains	Constructs	Operational Themes
Critical Action	Skills for Mobilization & Organization	Practicing transparency w/ broader community around actions Time management & planning Inter-group communication & mobilization

Social-Emotional	Developing a sustained commitment to social action Communicating & dialogue	Learning how to sit with and process feelings of pessimism Building skills to communicate with/within diverse communities Navigating conflict Being able to facilitate dialogue for others
	Setting & respecting boundaries	Learning when to engage and when not to Knowing your limits Learning to navigate political experiences in personal relationships
	Empathy Centering Identity	Perspective-taking Intersectional approaches to learning & action Centering social experiences & power dynamics without centering individuals
	Building Strong Relationships	Within & between communities
Opportunity Structures	Social Media School Family Community Groups Intergenerational Partnerships	

Critical Consciousness

The youth participant-researchers conceptualized critical consciousness as increasing social awareness and critical analysis by proactively learning about social issues, learning about oneself, and being open to new and conflicting information. Co-researcher ZB¹ summarized the consciousness as “...when a person or a group of individuals learn they can access the knowledge, skills, emotional and physical health, commitment, and passion to learn and examine oppressive things in the world, like oppressive groups of peoples or systems.”

¹ Age 14, English as first language, middle class, able-bodied, cisgender woman, Black, African, newer to social justice action, not involved in any political or community organizations

Social Awareness

Co-researcher JU² added that awareness is important because *"if you're aware of what's happening, then you know how to solve the problem quicker "* and that awareness of social issues is foundational to knowing what change needs to happen and what actions may be most needed at the moment. Co-researcher TZ³ added that *"we live in a society, so [SPD's] developing thoughts about that. But then politics are a part of that society, so it's developing an understanding of how injustices work, and how society works, and how politics fit into that or not. I think you couldn't have sociopolitical development without the politics or vice versa."*

Over half of the youth co-researchers explicitly noted the importance of proactive learning for critical consciousness. The young people emphasized how critical consciousness is an active process and highlighted ways they felt young people could learn to be agentic in their learning. They emphasized the importance of people developing a practice of seeking out information from distinct marginalized perspectives and learning how to digest and critically assess various information and standpoints.

The YPAR collective highlighted the importance of young people playing an active role in gathering their information from diverse sources and perspectives, and that this proactive approach to learning is continuous. Co-researcher TZ described it as *"...just making sure that you're not looking at things from a one-dimensional view. And then also when you are growing in your political journey, just make sure that you're continuously learning, instead of just trying to confirm the biases that you already hold."* All of the co-researchers agreed that for positive

² Age 14, Cantonese as first language, middle class, able-bodied, cisgender woman, bisexual, Asian, Malaysian, newer to social justice action, involved in three political or community organizations

³ Age 17, English as first language, middle class, able-bodied, non-binary, lesbian, white, experienced organizer, involved in six political or community organizations

SPD, young people must seek out the perspectives of people who have experiential knowledge or are most directly impacted by the issue because *“it's important to ask that person's point of view when they are directly related to that.”* As part of this discussion, multiple youth co-researchers noted that connecting different issues, struggles, and systems of oppression is an important practice of SPD.

Co-researcher KS⁴ suggested that learning how to take in information bit-by-bit is a crucial sociopolitical skill and is crucial for positive SPD. Based on their experiences, many youth co-researchers acknowledged that an enormous amount of information and perspectives are available to them, and the practice of continuous learning can feel overwhelming. Most youth co-researchers noted that it is important for youth to have support to avoid feelings of inadequacy, burnout, or confusion. Co-researcher KS shared that she often feels pressure to absorb a lot of information quickly to participate in political dialogues and spaces. She explained, *“And trying to learn everything all at once... it might not be the best. Because that would get you overwhelmed, and that wouldn't help with the setting boundary thing [in reference to a discussion about the need for setting boundaries to avoid burnout], but also you'd be learning too many things at once, and maybe you'd become misinformed or mixed up something like that.”* All the other co-researchers, except for co-researcher AK⁵, echoed the sentiment that there is pressure to “know more” before participating.

The YPAR collective also emphasized the importance of learning how to assess the reliability of information and the values or interests of the sources. All co-researchers agreed that

⁴ Age 16, English as first language, able-bodied, gender fluid, bisexual, white, some experience with social justice action, involved in one political or community organization

⁵ Age 16, Somali as first language, working class, able-bodied, cisgender man, straight, Black, Kenyan, Muslim, newer to social justice action, involved in two political or community organizations

they used social media and the internet as a major source of information and that popular platforms like TikTok and Instagram present opportunities to diversify the perspectives they can learn from. At the same time, all youth expressed that they also feel distrustful of information they glean from the internet and social media. As such, co-researchers MO⁶, PK⁷, KS, and TZ all felt that learning skills for digital literacy were important for SPD.

Critical Analysis

Co-researcher MP⁸ asserted that to build social awareness and analysis, young people must connect experiential and learned knowledge. She emphasized the importance of learning critical perspectives, histories of social issues, and social movements and building a language with which marginalized peoples can speak to the nuance and complexity of their experiences.

I would say that a lot, especially marginalized people, already have the skills because they have the lived experience, and they might have had to learn certain tactics to survive in a system that doesn't want them to exist. But I would say, the big missing piece that marginalized students aren't equipped with is just the education in history because our public school system and our private school system is really, really full of white supremacy and Eurocentric[ism], and they are unable to learn their own histories, and that's pretty intentional.

She expanded on this idea with an example of how

A lot of the qualities that people look for in leaders are being outspoken, being able to build community and foster connections with other people, be supportive, etc. And I feel like those are all qualities that marginalized people have had to learn. Mutual aid is

⁶ Age 15, English as first language, middle/working class, disabled, cisgenderwoman, fluid sexuality, Biracial Afro-Latina and white, Puerto Rican & Italian, newer to social justice action, involved in one political or community organization

⁷ Age 15, English as first language, upper middle class, disabled, Transmasc, MLM, Multiracial: Black, white, Desi, some experience with social justice action, involved in two political or community organizations

⁸ Age 18, English as first language, working class, able-bodied, cisgender woman, heterosexual, Asian, Vietnamese, experienced organizer, involved in two political or community organizations

something that's already practiced in a lot of marginalized communities because the government won't help them. So, I don't think it's the qualities a lot of organizers or potential organizers lack if they come from marginalized backgrounds, but it's the education piece...with this education, you can see, 'oh these movements in the past, like the Black Panther Party already fucked shit up with the government and already did all these awesome things and you can too.' But no one ever talks about that in school, so a lot of people, including myself, never learned this radical history until we're adults and look and try to access it on our own.

Critical Self-Awareness

In addition to learning about the physical, social, and political world around them, youth co-researchers identified the importance of proactively increasing ones' ability to be critically self-aware. The youth co-researchers understood self-awareness to be applying considerations of power, justice, and oppression to their reflections on themselves. Co-researcher TZ emphasized that SPD is "*developing thoughts about the society [one] lives in*" and "*an understanding of how injustices work, and how society works*" but also building an understanding of how you as a person "*fit into that.*"

As a collective, the youth identified the importance of being grounded in your identity, being "open and honest" with themselves, and being grounded in your reasons for engaging in social change work. Co-researcher TF⁹ noted that "*being grounded in your own identity, who you are and what your ideals are, and the reasoning behind why you're getting engaged*" is important because with social change work, one does not always see progress easily, and it is "*a lot of work and continual effort.*" Participant 2 added that an important outcome of SPD is someone "*be[ing] open about themselves, they know what takes them.*"

⁹ Age 17, English as first language, middle class, disabled, non-binary, asexual, white, experienced organizer, involved in five political or community organizations

Co-researcher JB¹⁰ described it as being transparent with one's self and with others and believed that *“a lot of new organizers do not understand transparency very well, or they don't understand how important it is. Because transparency is a whole skill and it involves a whole set of steps to do everything you do... but you need transparency to avoid subsequent toxicity and distrust.”* He also noted that transparency is an important part of *“self-accountability”* and *“the ability to hold your friends and co-organizers accountable”* when harm occurs within a community.

Co-researcher TZ pointed out that learning about how social issues are interconnected is an important part of increasing critical awareness and analysis, but that people being disconnected from the issues is *“just not useful at all, or it harms people and is opposite [to SPD].”* Co-researchers TZ and AJ¹¹ noted that SPD includes learning that being able to connect what one is learning with their own lived experiences is important, as well as connecting the information with *“... how they can get involved with it and how they can act with that knowledge.”*

Finally, four participant-researchers specifically noted the importance of exploring ones' opinions and ideologies. This included *“thinking about your [political opinions] in different contexts and formulating who you are as a political person”* (Co-researcher TF). Related to this practice, some young co-researchers theorized that building skills and capacity for work through contradictory values or beliefs is also an important part of SPD. Co-researcher TZ explains that young people, including themselves, *“need[s] to learn more how to engage with their knowledge. I*

¹⁰ Age 19, English as first language, upper class, able-bodied, cisgender man, gay, Biracial: Asian (Korean) and white, experienced organizer, involved in four political or community organizations

¹¹ Age 19, Spanish as first language, poor, able-bodied, cisgender woman, heterosexual, white Latine, Mexican, experienced organizer, involved in one political or community organization

think a lot of people see one thing and they're like 'yes, I totally agree with this, whoo!' and then they see another thing and they're like 'yeah I totally agree with this, whoo!', but they are conflicting things. And I never think about if there is a way to support both of those things, or if they need to think about which one their values correspond with."

Openness to New Information and Humility

For youth participant-researchers, SPD meant being intentional about reflecting on your own sociopolitical opinions and ideologies and being open to new information. Youth emphasized both cognitive and emotional aspects of this practice. Co-researcher TZ described how "*good sociopolitical development is one that is changeable and responds to new information*" and noted that evolving your thinking can help sustain social movements rather than keep them fixed or stagnant. Co-researcher AJ expanded on this idea to add, "*Because everyone has their own perspective, as you start to hear other people's perspectives, it really starts to open up a lot of different types of thinking. So I think that's definitely super important for community organizing because you can't just have one set way of thinking. You have to constantly evolve your way of thinking as you learn more information.*" She also noted that in this way, "*community is a big part that allows you to develop even bigger critical thinking.*"

Co-researcher JU added a discussion about the role of emotional regulation in taking in new information. She shared that SPD includes learning "*how do you react to being corrected... or accepting that they may be wrong*" at an emotional level. Co-researcher JB described positive SPD as "*the ability to be okay with someone being wrong initially... the learner needs to really recognize that they're learning, and then they need to remove the preconceived ideas that they know everything.*" As such, co-researchers JU, TF, TZ, JB, and ZB specifically included humility in their definition of SPD. They all discussed that sometimes knowledge about social justice

issues or topics could build social capital and exert power over others. Co-researcher JB described it as *“the opposite of stubbornness or ego and ‘I know everything’ is super key... even from the [person or group] that does know more and is being the educator.”* Co-researcher TZ added that it is *“bad sociopolitical development”* and is *“self-serving to be like ‘I’m so smart about all this.’”*

Critical Action

The youth participant-researchers discussed the importance and complexities of learning how to link what you are learning with sociopolitical action you can take. Co-researcher TZ felt that the process of *“moving from the stages of developing awareness and ideology to putting those ideologies into action, like the steps between thinking and doing”* was particularly important for SPD. Co-researcher KS believed that SPD was fundamentally *“the process [of learning] all the skills to perform social justice.”*

Co-researchers KS, TZ, and MP discussed the importance of developing skills that make young people effective organizers and social change agents. Co-researcher MP described the goal of SPD to be *“actively mediating certain problems in politics and policy and ensuring that all people are being heard and their demands are being met.”* She made a point to emphasize that the quality and characteristics of the action-taking and movement-building matters for the sociopolitical development process. Co-researcher MP said that critical action must support *“progress.”* All but two co-researchers asserted that critical action was explicitly anti-capitalist, and all co-researchers agreed that critical action in SPD was anti-oppressive in its aims. Co-researcher MP explained, *“some forms of sociopolitical development are actually harmful and lacking progress...because they’re taking away traction from the movement and the efforts, and*

instead being used to benefit one single demographic like white feminism or capitalist pride, things like that.”

The young participant-researchers identified self-care or self-love, accountability, advocacy, and skills for mobilization and organization as foundational aspects of critical action.

Self-Care & Self-Love

Co-researchers PK, AK, TF, AJ, and ZB all identified how practicing self-care and self-love were sociopolitical acts in and of themselves. Co-researcher AK discussed how identity is politicized, particularly for Black and trans people. He asserted that appreciating one's identity and respecting other peoples' is an important sociopolitical act. Co-researcher PK explained that the emotional stress of doing transformative work as a disabled trans young person of color could be unhealthy and feel exploitative. Therefore, they saw caring for themselves as an important type of critical action that supports sustained SPD. Co-researcher AK, a young, Black, Muslim, immigrant youth, described "being happy with myself and my identity" as a way he took action for social justice. Co-researchers TF, AJ, and ZB also understood self-care and "self-love" (co-researcher TF) as sociopolitical acts in different ways.

Accountability

Accountability was discussed amongst a number of the participant-researchers but was most emphasized by co-researchers TZ, MP, and JB. Participant JB identified two types of accountability that he saw as critical actions that were central to SPD, *“I think self-accountability, but I think even more the ability to hold your friends and co-organizers accountable.”* His ideas of self-accountability were aligned with many of the ideas in critical self-awareness described above, and he expanded on an example of how important

accountability within an organization is for strong and sustainable social movements. He explained, *“I’ve seen organizations blow up because co-organizers let one person continue to do toxic things and not call them out for it, or not restoratively resolve it. And it ends up snowballing... and that blows up everything.”* While co-researcher JB focused on accountability within sociopolitical organizations or coalitions, Co-researcher TZ added that accountability is a set of actions that must be practiced between organizations and those in the broader community as well.

Advocacy

Co-researchers JU, PK, MP, and AJ all identified advocacy as a practice that was a defining feature of critical action. Co-researchers JU and PK discussed the importance of self-advocacy. Co-researcher JU described self-advocacy as *“being able to reach out, and know what you need help with, and know who to ask.”* Co-researcher PK theorized that advocacy was an important practice that needed to be built in small ways over time. He asserted that people build skills for advocacy by *“...casually ask[ing] for things that they need, without even if it's homework or something. or just everywhere you go.”*

Both co-researchers JU and PK believed that self-advocacy is an important building block for advocating for others and, as such, identified it as a form of critical action. In defining SPD, co-researcher JU shared that she felt like SPD was,

...a willingness to be there to speak and open your voice, because I think that some teenagers are kind of nervous about speaking and stating their opinion for fear of being told 'no' or fear of being laughed at because people don't like what they're saying. So you have to have bravery and strength, and a willingness to speak out, and to have charisma around you. And you have this sense of trust that you won't back down.

In defining SPD, co-researcher MP said that the ‘political’ part of sociopolitical development is advocacy, which she defined as “*defending different causes, identities and human rights.*” Co-researcher AJ defined advocacy as “*anti-oppression work*” but echoed the same sentiments as co-researcher MP. She also asserted that developing a sustained commitment to advocating for anti-oppression in oneself, relationships, and community is a foundational aspect of critical action.

Skills for Mobilization and Organization

Finally, participant-researchers PK, TF, TZ, and JB identified specific skills important for mobilization and building organizations. They theorized that developing these skills or practices was synonymous with developing the capacity for effective and transformative action. Examples of skills included being able to lead actions, organize and coordinate the logistics of events, manage time, reach out to people, and communicate effectively to mobilize others.

Co-researcher JB also positioned transparency as a critical action or set of actions that are central to SPD. When asked how he defines SPD, he said, amongst other things,

Transparency. I'd say a lot of new organizers do not understand transparency very well. Or they don't understand how important it is. Because transparency is a whole skill, and it involves a whole set of steps to do everything you do. Organizing needs transparency, and that involves having votes, having meetings about decisions...you need transparency to avoid subsequent toxicity and distrust. So that's a good thing, transparency.

Social and Emotional Aspects of SPD

Finally, the participant-researchers identified several important social and emotional aspects of SPD that are not currently emphasized in existing literature as domains in and of themselves. These include specific practices related to (1) developing a sustained commitment to

social action, (2) communication and dialogue, (3) setting and respecting boundaries, (4) empathy, and (5) building strong relationships.

Developing a Sustained Commitment to Social Justice

Five of the youth co-researchers (TF, TZ, AJ, JB & ZB) discussed the importance of developing a sustained commitment to social justice. Co-researchers TZ, AJ, and ZB noted how a deep commitment to learning magnifies some of the positive aspects of SPD in important ways. Co-researcher AJ noted how developing a sustained commitment to social justice can positively affect critical reflection and critical consciousness development. She believed that a sustained commitment to social justice meant “*constantly evolve your way of thinking, as you learn more information*” and that this practice “*allows you to develop even bigger critical thinking.*”

Co-researchers TF and JB emphasized the importance of developing a sustained commitment to social justice as a way of mitigating some of the negative feelings and experiences that can come with SPD. They all highlighted that developing critical consciousness and organizing came with the struggles of feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, and sometimes pessimism. For example, co-researcher TF noted that developing an intersectional understanding of social problems is important but stressful because “changing sociopolitical conditions are all contingent on the other ones.” They believed that developing a sustained commitment was crucial for seeing your action as part of a bigger picture. Co-researcher JB noted feelings of hope throughout his SPD alongside feelings of pessimism. He noted that learning how to sit with, understand, and work through that pessimism is very important for young people to stay engaged in social change work for the long haul.

Communicating and Dialogue

Youth participant-researchers understood communication and dialogue as central to what youth SPD is. They asserted that SPD includes building skills to communicate with diverse audiences and constructively work through conflict. Co-researchers JU, TF, TZ, MP, and ZB all emphasized the importance of having the ability to communicate within racially, socially, politically, and developmentally diverse communities. When asked what sociopolitical development meant in their mind, co-researcher ZB shared, “I think communication is obviously key and number one. Because you can't really understand other people's point of view in their life without communicating with them, talking with them.”

Co-researchers TF and ZB noted that SPD includes diverse communication skills and practices. They noted that positive development in SPD-related communication is not normative and that there are many different ways of communicating. Co-researcher ZB emphasized that *“It's not only verbal communication but also, you know, communicating through body language.”* Co-researcher TF asserted that being the most outspoken person is not the goal *“because there are a lot of different roles that you can take on [in] being able to talk with people and hold conversations.”*

Co-researchers TF, TZ, and MP discussed the importance of speaking publicly or with people you don't know as part of organizing and movement building. Co-researcher TZ shared a story of developing the skill of talking with people they don't know about social issues in the context of flyering, canvassing, and phone banking. Co-researcher MP discussed the importance of young people being able to self-advocate and be public leaders that help bring attention to social movements by speaking at large events like a march or city council meeting.

Co-researcher MO, TF, and TZ noted that specific skills need to be developed to share information with others in clear and accessible ways. Co-researcher TF described it as being able to “*meet people where they are in a conversation, instead of coming at it with your own knowledge level... being approachable with what you're talking about.*” They explained that SPD includes the ability to communicate effectively with

...people that don't have the same identity as you, because when you're talking to students, like young people or whatever, everybody kind of talks the same and has the same lingo and slang and stuff. But everybody kind of talks the same. So you're obviously not going to approach a conversation with somebody who's older or even younger the same way that you would talk to somebody who's another teenager... and especially if you're trying to organize something or trying to convey your opinions or canvas for a political candidate or whatever. You can't approach everybody in the same way, so just getting used to talking to other people who are maybe older or they don't have the same identities as you to build your communication skills.

Co-researcher TZ described this exact skill as “*really hard*” and one they feel like “often gets overlooked” in youth SPD and organizing skill-building, particularly they felt like SPD needed to include “*learn[ing] how to engage with people that they disagree with.*” Co-researcher MO added that disagreement and conflict will happen but that positive SPD would be engaging in a way that “*seek[s] diverse perspectives and nuance... and doesn't degrade sides.*”

In addition to having skills for sharing information effectively with people of different identities, the participant-researchers noted that SPD includes the ability to facilitate dialogue between others in their communities and ensure that marginalized voices are heard.

Co-researcher MP added that one's ability to make sure people's voices are heard must be linked to their sociopolitical action. She included “*actively mediating certain problems in politics and policy and ensuring that all people are being heard and their demands are being met*” in her definition of SPD.

While communicating through difference was a key feature in the participant-researchers' definition of SPD, they also emphasized the importance of setting healthy boundaries and knowing when to disengage.

Setting and Respecting Boundaries

Youth participant-researchers noted various ways that setting and respecting boundaries is central to youth SPD. Most relevant to communication and dialogue, multiple young people (co-researchers PK, KS, AK, TF, TZ, MP, JB, ZB) said it is an important skill and practice to know when to disengage in sociopolitical dialogue. Dialoguing about power, oppression, and justice can be cognitively and emotionally difficult, particularly for young people who may experience racial, gender, or other social violence that can be triggered in conversation. Co-researcher PK noted that for youth of color, learning to set boundaries around when to engage and when not to is critical for maintaining ones' emotional health. He shared that SPD includes *"...doing this type of emotional work for free... which a lot of people of color or people of oppressed groups do, just like every day"* and therefore, *"setting those boundaries"* was crucial.

The young people noted that difficulty is different from "being drained" by others who are disingenuously engaging. The participant-researchers noted that SPD includes the ability to assess a situation and *"take a step back and think about what is actually going to happen as a result of the conversation"* (Co-researcher TF). They described numerous examples of ways that people turned dialogues into "personal attacks" or just a *"flex of knowledge"* as a way of social jockeying. In addition to setting boundaries for oneself, co-researcher AK noted that SPD includes the ability to read and respond when someone else is negatively affected by something that is said and *"they need to respect other people's boundaries, and they need to stop talking when somebody gets very uncomfortable."*

The young participant-researchers noted other types of boundary-setting that were also central to SPD. They noted that "knowing your limits" or when you don't have the capacity for things is important for staying engaged in sociopolitical work for the long haul, as is knowing how to navigate the sometimes-blurry boundaries in ones' relationships with co-organizers. With respect to knowing ones' limits, they noted that this was an important aspect of SPD that helps people stay engaged in the long-term and avoid burnout. Co-researcher KS explained that *"Especially when you're a social justice activist, you can only take so much until you're physically, mentally just exhausted and overwhelmed. And you need to set a boundary with yourself on when you need to stop and take a break."* Co-researcher TF emphasized that this kind of boundary setting is a skill that needs to be developed *"I don't really know the best practices to go about it... it's about who you are and your morals and stuff that's deeply rooted in you."* They explained that they don't quite know what self-care looks like for them, and also explained that the social problems they are working against feel so urgent *"when you're dealing with issues that are affecting people's lives now, you're like 'oh I can't take a break.'" And that setting boundaries can feel guilt-inducing. They said that it is hard for them to "not associate guilt with it because it's hard obviously when there's people that can't really take a break from the issue."*

The next section emphasizes the centrality of building strong relationships with young peoples' conceptualization of SPD. One aspect of this was learning how to navigate the amorphous boundary between friend and co-organizer. Co-researchers TZ, MP, AJ, and JB all brought up how boundaries become blurred as they built personal and political relationships with others as part of their SPD. Co-researcher JB describes that *"you can be both"* but that,

I am more likely to call out a co-organizer for something wrong they did. And a friend, I am more likely to discuss big decisions with a friend group and more willing to listen to a friend and give special treatment to their perspectives and ideas, and logic. Essentially it comes down to preferential treatment and then also lack of accountability. Also, bringing things up, sometimes I think, this is a little more immature than most people get, but bringing external things and friendship things up in activist spaces, is also irrelevant and toxic too.

He called for people to develop skills for practicing accountability within communities in a way that doesn't let problematic things slide amongst friends and doesn't invite interpersonal issues to be used to ostracize people from sociopolitical spaces.

Empathy

Co-researchers JU, KS, JB, and ZB emphasized empathy and perspective-taking as foundational aspects of SPD. Co-researcher JU theorized that "practicing empathy" was a prerequisite to developing a deeper awareness of analysis of an issue and also of knowing how to take action to address problems. Co-researcher ZB shared a very similar sentiment and added that empathy is a skill that needs to be developed. She acknowledged that *"because I know a lot of people, they struggle with learning how to understand people's feelings. But I think that's a very key skill to have when thinking about social-political development."* Co-researcher KS also defined SPD as developing skills for empathy. They added that the practice of empathy can be diverse, *"I don't think there's any one specific way to develop empathy because obviously, it stems from how people were raised and stuff...so it's going to be different for everyone."*

Co-researcher ZB theorized that empathy was foundational for developing an analysis of the social world that acknowledges that multiple positionalities and personal truths can co-exist. This is important for validating and acting upon problems you may not be directly affected by and acknowledging that people experience things differently based on their social identities.

Related to this point, centering identity in critical reflection and action was another defining feature of SPD.

Centering Identity

Co-researchers KM¹², AK, MP, JB, ZB and TF all noted that the practice of centering identity in critical reflection and action was integral to SPD. For example, when asked what SPD looks like in practice, co-researcher AK replied, “*When you respect someone's identities.*” For some young participant-researchers, this meant “being grounded in who you are” (Co-researcher TF).

Co-researchers AK and MP explicitly called out the idea of intersectionality with respect to centering identity. As part of his SPD definition, Co-researcher AK added that it was when “*two political or social factors getting combined. They intersect. Like maybe you identify as non-binary, and you are a Black individual or something like that.*” He added that “*when you identify yourself as Black, some political stuff gets involved, and for non-binary.*” He highlighted how identity is inherently politicized in our society and that sometimes just being who you are is a sociopolitical act and, therefore, an important part of SPD. Co-researcher MP noted that sociopolitical acts also must be intersectional to fit into her definition of SPD. She said that some forms of SPD “*...are actually harmful and lacking progress...like something backwards, because they're taking away traction from the movement and the efforts, and instead being used to benefit a single demographic like white feminism.*”

Co-researcher KM noted that being grounded in and centering identity does not mean centering individuals or yourself in social justice spaces. She explained that centering oneself can

¹² Age 15, Vietnamese as first language, working class, able-bodied, cisgender woman, heterosexual, Asian, Vietnamese, experienced organizer, involved in eight political or community organizations

"As opposed to amplifying these issues, sell yourself in them as a sort of savior." Instead, it means centering marginalized experiences. She explained,

It's definitely important to de-center yourself from these movements because, at the end of the day, these movements are not about posting it or placing yourself in a position of importance. It's about helping marginalized communities and really advocating for systemic and institutional change against the systems that have been marginalizing these groups of people.

Co-researcher JB echoed these ideas and added that developing humility is one important aspect of youth SPD. He added that humility is

...really hard for especially self-proclaimed, involved activists already. I think, because it's really hard for people who have been doing sociopolitical work, it's hard to acknowledge that you're wrong because it means the labor you put in was wrong too. A lot of youth activists make youth activism a big part of personality, and so it means a lot of who they are has been wrong or harmful.

Building Strong Relationships

Relationships being central to SPD is implicit in aspects like communication/dialogue, boundary-setting, empathy, and identity. However, the youth participant-researchers made a point to note that having skills for building strong relationships within and between communities is a defining feature of SPD and warranted a specific mention. The participant researchers understood SPD to include the practice of seeking out meaningful connections within a community. For example, when asked to define what SPD meant to him, AK immediately responded with supporting or getting supported by family and friends. MP theorized that "*your background influences your understanding of what sociopolitical development is and the way that you connect with community relates to how you identify or interpret sociopolitical development.*" She stated that relationships are such a natural and assumed aspect of SPD for her

community, and perhaps other communities of color, it may seem too obvious to think to mention or think of it as a specific skill or practice to develop.

Co-researchers MP and JB also noted that SPD includes building relationships across and between communities. MP discussed this in terms of organizers building trust between herself and the communities she is working with, particularly if she does not come from that community. She explained that without this practice, that sociopolitical action did not feel true to her definition of SPD.

A lot of community organizers lack the whole community part of their work they just go in and do straight-up events and stuff, and they don't actually spend time with the people they're helping and trying to build friendships and build community, which is supposed to be the whole point of the work. They don't have time to spend time with people or get to know people on a deeper level they're just kind of go, and they're like 'hey I have all this food for you' and, not actually trying to build an actual solid foundation relationship with the people in that community.

JB asserted that transparency and proactive engagement between sociopolitical organizing efforts and impacted communities was another defining feature of positive SPD. He noted that transparency is a skill that needs to be developed and practiced and,

I'd say a lot of new organizers do not understand transparency very well, or they don't understand how important it is. Because transparency is a whole skill, and it involves a whole set of steps to do everything you do in an organization. An organization needs transparency, and that involves having votes having meetings about decisions that leaders could very easily just make themselves....you need transparency to avoid subsequent toxicity and distrust.

Opportunity Structures

The participant-researchers identified five key opportunity structures: social media/the internet, school, family, community groups, and intergenerational partnerships within sociopolitical institutions.

Social Media

All youth co-researchers noted that social media is an important place where they are developing their capacity for critical reflection and action and that they most often seek out information about social justice and injustice online. This opportunity structure is the key focus of this dissertation and will be expanded upon in greater detail in the subsequent chapters.

School

Four (JU, MO, PK, MP) of the young people identified schools as important places of SPD. MP shared that schools need to dedicate more time and resources to teaching social issues, the history of social movements, and contemporary social change efforts. She shared that being able to learn about racial and social justice in school, coupled with the internet for independent research, "*makes things a lot more accessible.*" She explained that classrooms might have certain qualities that support youth SPD. She shared that it is important to have someone with pedagogical training gather and organize resources and that having a community of people learning about racial and social justice together can help people feel less alone when trying to understand complicated ideas and histories. For example, she shared how schools can help young people learn how to learn about social issues and linked this with the need for more teachers of color.

It's more difficult to find free readings and free curriculum and stuff [on your own online]. Especially if you come from an underserved area, so you don't even know how to build your own curriculum because a lot of your teachers haven't been able to build a solid one in the entirety of your life. So, I think on the individual level, it's really hard to recommend things because it's difficult to look for curriculum and education and history when you're not in a classroom, which is also intentional because classrooms education has been purposely built to exclude Black and Brown and poor people. So that's a whole other issue itself, but I would say the big answer would be hiring more Black and Brown teachers because a

lot of schools, especially in Seattle, represent a lot of marginalized students, but their teachers don't.

Some young people, including MP, felt schools could be detrimental to youth SPD, particularly how they perpetuate white-dominant narratives of history and social issues. Co-researcher AJ talks about this when discussing the importance of intergenerational partnerships later in this section. But if transformed, all felt like it could be a place that supports guided critical reflection. Co-researchers JU and MO also noted that important social learning happens in schools separate from instruction. For example, JU shared that the social norms of being interested in social justice in her new middle school increased her motivation for learning more,

I wasn't very socially aware and politically aware, mostly because I feel like that didn't really affect me. But only in middle school, as I said, I think in our last meeting, middle school was really different because a lot of kids at [that] middle school had a lot of opinions, so that made me look more into it and develop my own opinion so I could talk more about it with my other friends.

That participant learned more about her Asian racial and ethnic identity, gender identity, and organizing efforts against Asian hate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Family

Developing critical consciousness with their family was central for co-researchers JU, PK, KS, AK, TF, and TZ. AK, TF, and TZ took their first-ever sociopolitical action alongside a parent or a grandparent. KS discussed how their family modeled empathy, a skill that, in the next section, numerous youth will identify as an important aspect of SPD. PK said that he primarily learned about racial and social justice issues from family and could also develop skills for self-advocacy in the home. He said he would "*practice*" asking for things he needs and exploring ways to use his voice in a supportive place. He also described ways to practice engaging in political debates or disagreements with siblings and parents. TZ also shared a reflective story of

learning about ideas of fairness and diversity of thought in the home as a younger child, describing ones' ideological values and commitments to social justice as something that "*sneaks up on you* ." JU describes the ways that family norms can impact SPD. Growing up, she has always shared responsibility for caring for her younger siblings. She said that this "*creates a sort of bravery*" and shared ways to use her leadership position in the family to reflect on her power. She shared multiple stories of times she reflected on her values and principles of discipline when dealing with care-taking issues, tying those values and principles to issues of social justice. She talked about how seeing these things linked together in this way made some of the sociopolitical messages she read on social media make more sense with her daily experience.

So while the family was an important opportunity structure, some youth of immigrant parents felt like family played an ambivalent role. On the one hand, their experiences as immigrants increased awareness and enriched their analysis of social systems and inequities based on ethnicity. However, they also found that it was difficult to talk openly with family members about some issues of racial and gender justice and certain ideologies. Some young people felt like their parents' and grandparents' views were more conservative and would avoid discussions about their ideas/perspectives on sociopolitical issues to maintain harmony in the household and respect their family members' own unique social experiences. For example, Co-researcher JB struggled to reconcile his Korean immigrant family's experience with communism against the ideas of communism young American-based grassroots organizations presented to him. He was left with a feeling like he could not truly explore the questions he had in either space for fear of his integrity called into question.

Community Groups

Four participants stressed the importance of "*taking the initiative to reach out to people*" and learning from conversations with community members outside of the home. When reflecting on the possibilities of schools being an important facilitator to youth SPD, she also identified the need for alternative learning spaces. She shared some local examples of community-based organizations doing popular education and youth mentorship in the south end of Seattle, a historically BIPOC area. PK shared that being a part of community organizations or groups allowed him to hear about others' experiences outside his existing social network. ZB shared some experiences with youth programs and after-school programs that helped her access knowledge and conversations about social justice that she feels she may not have otherwise accessed.

Intergenerational Partnerships

Related and sometimes overlapping with community groups, co-researchers KM, TZ, MP, and AJ noted the role of intergenerational partnerships in youth SPD. For example, AJ shared that so much of her SPD was fueled by engaging with older community members.

I think it was a lot of talking to older members of the community. Because one thing that someone brought up was adults and older people have wisdom, and what youth have are ideas, which I thought was really interesting because the more I thought about it, a lot of adults and older people have lived experience and have seen the world for much longer than youth have. And youth have new ideas and fresh ideas. And so, combining those two together creates this really amazing mix because we have all of these adults guiding us and providing their wisdom. But then also youth at the same time, providing new ideas for how to tackle more newer issues. So I really am glad for a lot of the community members who took time to educate us and provide all of this new insight that a lot of us weren't aware of. Because it wasn't taught in our history classes and it wasn't taught at school. So yeah, it was just really

interesting to see that a lot of the stuff that I learned came from my community and not from school.

Finally, AJ noted the ways that sociopolitical development is not something that is solely driven by young people. Individual adults and sociopolitical institutions play an active role in youth SPD, particularly in sustaining youth sociopolitical participation in meaningful ways. She explained,

I think positive sociopolitical development would be political systems engaging with youth and trying to develop those relationships. I'm starting to see that right now, through the work that I'm doing where campaigns and people in power are trying to engage more youth and have more youth opinion. And really trying to engage a wide variety of youth as well, so coming from BIPOC communities, low income, immigrant as well. I think it's slowly starting to change things, at least in the Seattle area.

Youth critical consciousness, organizing, and the health of intergenerational movements.

Discussion

The results from this chapter have several implications for youth SPD research and practice. SPD can be supported across youth development, school, and social service contexts. Despite the critical aims of SPD (Watts et al., 2003), each of these contexts is often complicit in the ongoing oppression of marginalized young peoples (Sibley, 1995; Lesko, 2012). To undo these systems, new ways of thinking and doing must be fostered. For SPD practice, it is important to problematize and critically reflect on the theories from which practice is derived, just as much as the implementation of SPD practice. Engaging youth in the theoretical and conceptual construction of the SPD field is important as they have unique lived experience that adds necessary knowledge, perspective, and nuance.

Yet their experiential knowledge is often marginalized from the theoretical work that informs SPD research and practice. At the time of writing this, there are no published works that use

participatory research to illuminate the folk SPD theories of sociopolitically engaged youth. There is a need for increased youth participation in the conceptual work of SPD, not just the testing of constructs. By integrating youth voice into theory development, subsequent research and practice may be more rigorous and relevant to lived. This project did so with a group of 12 young people who are diverse in youth age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and sociopolitical experience. This serves as an anchor for the YPAR project this collective of young people took on, but also can serve as a collection of perspectives for other youth SPD researchers to consider in their work.

The SPD process is unique for different racially and socially marginalized youth (Anyiwo et al., 2018). The conceptualization offered by this collective was informed by a diversity of intersectional identities. It is meant to help build a shared language and make the assumptions that may be embedded into current SPD models more visible. This facilitates ongoing critical reflection and problematization of SPD practice with communities that have multiple marginalized identities. However, SPD as a concept and as a practice is normative to the unique sociocultural contexts of a community. As such, the field would also benefit from YPAR projects that focus on the unique attributes of SPD within different marginalized identities and communities.

I note other contributions to the existing SPD literature as well. The constructs of critical consciousness and critical action are more widely explored in existing literature, and these results provide added insight into how youth may operationalize these ideas. In particular, the models outlined in chapter two (Table 1) largely emphasize the cognitive and behavioral aspects of SPD. The YPAR collective's work largely affirms many of the existing conceptual models of youth SPD, but does place added emphasis on a variety of social and emotional factors like empathy

practice, relationships, boundary setting, self-love, accountability and dialogue. While some of these practices may be implicit in existing models, the YPAR collective here repositions these attributes as central to SPD. While some scholars have explored the role of emotional support in civic engagement (Hope & Spencer, 2017; Kelly, 2018; Zimmerman, 2016), this study expands on some of those ideas and more directly positions social and emotional development as domains in and of themselves in youth SPD. By expanding SPD domains to more holistically include social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components, we can better understand people's SPD processes and identify additional opportunities for adults, organizations, and institutions to support.

These results have opened some potential lines of inquiry around opportunity structures. The participant-researchers emphasized the importance of opportunities like social media, school, family, community-based organizations, and other intergenerational partnerships. They also discuss some of the ways that these opportunity structures may interact with one another, such as school and community organizations being a place where they can better process and engage with what they are experiencing online. This has implications for both research and practice in that it helps identify possible points of leverage where interventions and supports may be effective and helps us better understand how to transform the social systems and structures that impact youth SPD. The following chapters focus on examining social media as an opportunity structure for SPD.

Limitations and Future Directions for Research

There are several limitations to this work. As mentioned in the discussion above, the YPAR collective was made up of youth researchers who were diverse in grade, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and sociopolitical experience. While this produced important

dialogue and insights around SPD as a construct, this approach also inevitably misses or flattens some of the nuance and diversity within sociocultural communities (i.e., within the AfroLatinx community, or within the trans, multi-racial community). Critically examining some of the assumptions made here within YPAR collectives that share more experience would benefit the field and is an important part of anti-oppressive practice and research. Broader limitations to the overall study will be discussed in chapter seven.

Conclusion

The youth participant-researchers constructed a holistic conceptualization of youth SPD that more intentionally incorporates the social and emotional domains of youth SPD. These results enrich the SPD literature and serve as an anchor for our YPAR study on the relationship of social media to youth SPD. In the next chapter, we examine how social media both facilitates and limits the participant-researchers' conceptualizations of youth SPD. As stated in earlier chapters, our research questions were: (1) In what ways does social media facilitate youth sociopolitical development? And (2) In what ways does social media limit youth sociopolitical development. The conceptualization of youth SPD outlined in this chapter is what drives youth data collection and analysis decisions, it also informs our collective interpretations of the results.

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CHAPTER 5

Chapters 5 and 6 outline some of the results of pursuing the overarching research questions:

- (1) In what ways does social media facilitate youth sociopolitical development?*
- (2) In what ways does social media limit, or even act counterproductive to, youth sociopolitical development?*

Review of Analytic Approach

As described in Chapter 3, the YPAR collective utilized the photovoice, survey, semi-structured interview, observational, and transcribed dialogue data. For the visual data, facilitation was guided by the analytical frameworks offered by Wang (1999) and Wang & Hannes (2020). These frameworks guide analysis of the images' production, reception, and content. All textual or spoken word data was recorded and transcribed, and I used a grounded theory analytics approach.

In the first-order round of coding, I used a line-by-line grounded theory approach to stay as close to the young co-researchers' words and ideas as possible. After the initial round of coding, we had 189 different in-vivo codes across all the data. These codes were organized into "SPD Facilitators" or "SPD Barriers/Challenges" categories. This included 87 "facilitator" themes and 102 related to "barriers or challenges."

To begin second-order coding, I brought a basic qualitative map of in-vivo codes to each participant-researcher (Anfara, 2008). At this point, we conducted second-order coding together. We discussed which codes were speaking to similar ideas and which codes seemed to be in conflict or contradiction with one another. The co-researchers and I analyzed their own codes in dyads. Then we used cross-case comparison to draw out additional insights across the different

“sites” or youth experiences. We looked for patterns, as well as differences or deviations in interpretations. After this was done with each co-researcher, the facilitator designed a workshop where the youth could double-check that any summaries or interpretations were accurate and representative.

In total, youth identified nine important conflicts, contradictions, or tensions that give insight into the ambivalent relationship between social media and youth sociopolitical development. These included issues of (1) accessibility, (2) critical consciousness development, (3) identity development, (4) transparency & visibility, (5) conflict, (6) emotional & mental health, (7) movements & organizing, (8) empowerment and (9) relationships. This dissertation will go into the first two in more detail, but all have interrelated themes. I prioritize accessibility and critical consciousness development in this dissertation because the YPAR collective identified them as among the most important or prevalent facilitators and barriers they encountered. The remaining issues will be explored in future manuscripts.

Finding 1: Increasing Accessibility →← Gatekeeping, Increased Exposure, and Unhealthy Boundary Setting

The YPAR collective identified a series of ways that social media increases the accessibility of information to support critical consciousness development and access to organizing and other types of critical action for youth. However, the collective also identified ways that social media can contribute to gatekeeping or cases where increased access has adverse effects on youth SPD. They also examined how increased accessibility also increases youth of colors' exposure to racist violence and that it can be difficult to practice healthy boundaries in ways that adversely impact youth SPD.

Increasing Accessibility

Youth identified various ways that social media increases the accessibility of information and critical action. They included: (1) decreasing barriers to critical ideas, theories and histories and (2) increasing access to sociopolitical action.

Decreasing Barriers to Critical Ideas, Histories & Theories

Participant-researchers gave multiple examples of how social media has tools that can make critical theory and dialogue more accessible to youth who experience barriers to this information. The YPAR collective thought about accessibility in a variety of ways. For example, co-researcher TF shared an example of a TikTok video from an organization called Radical in Progress, a “*passion project-turned-social enterprise run by a volunteer team that understands the importance of social justice education.*” A still image is shown as Image 1 (Radical In Progress, 2021). The group launched a site that has been creating study guides for “must-read *social justice literature*” since January 2021 (Radical in Progress, n.d.). TF described the 48-second-long video,

The post is a Tiktok video from the account "radicalinprogress" overviewing environmental racism. The video's creator goes over their reflections from Ingrid Waldron's "There's Something in the Water," the definition of environmental racism, and the sociopolitical factors that enable environmental racism in an accessible format. They then direct you to Radical in Progress' "study guide" on Waldron's book.

TF, who is disabled, explained that they felt this post was important because:

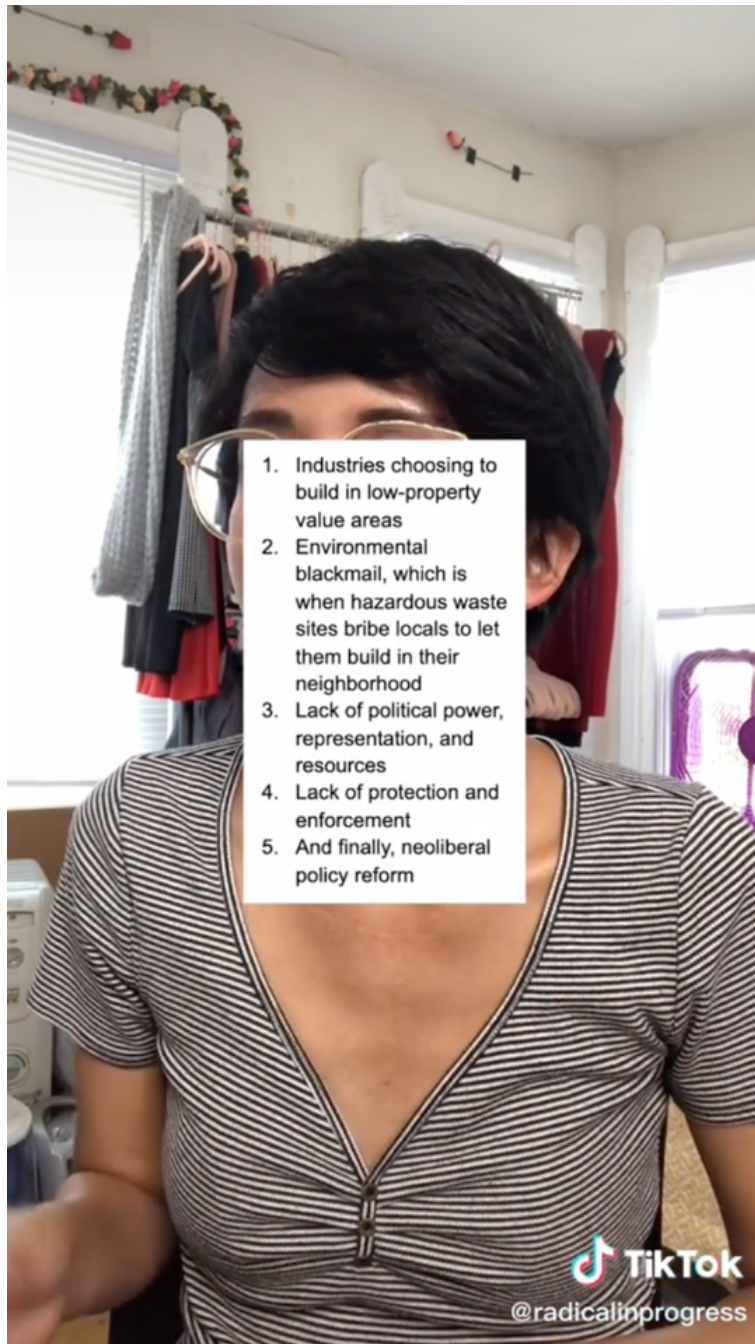
Oftentimes, social theory books are highly inaccessible due to factors like time, finances, and disability. But, this account/service, Radical In Progress, breaks down theory and "radical" concepts into study guides and other resources that are understandable and easily accessible. In this specific post, the creator explains environmental racism in layman's terms so that those who have

not/cannot read "There's Something in the Water" still have access to valuable information.

They explain that “this post is intended for those who are interested in social justice and have a barrier preventing them from reading theory books.” They collected this post because it *“is a perfect representation of how social media can be used to make radical politics more attainable [for] young people, especially those from marginalized communities, who do not have access to theory can still grow their social justice identities and values.”*

Image 1

Photovoice Submission 10_15. (Radical in Progress, 2021).



Additionally, participant-researchers TZ and AJ collected examples of Instagram posts using alt text to help communicate important information. Alt-text is a description of the image that describes its' contents for blind or visually impaired users. Co-researcher AJ noted that some of the features designed for people with disabilities actually improve access and communication practices around important ideas for everyone. She explained,

I think TikToks that use captions are really effective, not only because it is more accessible to the disability community. I find those super effective, especially because you can highlight and underline which parts are most important in the captions.

Co-researcher MP pointed out that critical ideas, theories, or histories are often left out of high school curricula. She saw more colleges and universities introducing these ideas and histories. Still, in those cases, there are barriers to entry, and the ideas can be further made inaccessible through academic language and jargon. She notes that social media creates a different space where critical ideas, theories, and histories can be shared and discussed in accessible and engaging ways for all.

A lot of different platforms have surfaced and gained millions of followers for the racial justice work. And they've been a really key resource in racial justice and race-based education, especially it's really interesting how social media can make a lot of topics that are taboo or inaccessible in modern academia accessible. Like so much history, for example, Rachel Cargle¹³, during every February she'll have a day and a curriculum, where she will assign a certain historical event or topic for her followers to research and learn about throughout the month, and it's free.

¹³ Rachel Cargle is a public academic, writer & lecturer with over 1.7 million followers on Instagram (Rachel Elizabeth Cargle, n.d.). Rachel Cargle has an umbrella company called The Loveland Group which houses a project called The Great Unlearn. It is a donation-based community-learning project that curates social syllabi (Rachel Cargle, n.d.).

Participant-researcher AJ pointed to how the program and design limitations of Twitter help creators keep their content concise and clear. This contributes to the information being more approachable and more accessible to engage with. She added that being able to thread and connect brief statements helps young people piece together various sources or ideas.

Twitter also does a really good job at Twitter threads and going at a step-by-step guide. Like the disability pride month post [Image 2]. Like 'hey these are some things that you should be aware of,' 'this is what to do,' 'this is how you should approach certain people. I think that sort of visual guide is very helpful for a lot of people.

She goes on to explain that by keeping information concise and clear, it is also easier to share or disseminate that information across different platforms, therefore potentially being made accessible to an even wider audience, *“On Twitter, it might not be the most eye-appealing thing, but once you screenshot it and repost it on Instagram it's just really easy for people to swipe through and visually see the different stuff.”*

Image 2

Photovoice Submission 13_20. Twitter. (Anonymous, 2021).



Nearly all youth researchers collected at least one example of a social justice slideshow, a form of popular education that has become very prevalent on social media in the past couple of years. Social justice slideshows are aesthetically pleasing, bite-sized explanations of critical

ideas and histories (Nguyen,2020). Image 3 (So.Informed, n.d.) was collected by co-researcher ZB. It is a series of slideshows created by an Instagram account So.informed but previously called SoYouWantToTalkAbout. This account has over 2.8 million followers and is run by a content creator named Jessica Natale (So.Informed, n.d.), a white woman with a background in journalism and marketing who started the page after volunteering with the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign. She initially created the page to “*combat misinformation and to break down topics surrounding the election*” (Natale, n.d.). On her professional website, she describes the page as

...an Instagram dedicated to dissecting progressive politics and social issues in graphic slideshow form. With a heavy focus on current events and issues, the So page breaks down complex topics to inform people of all ages, educational backgrounds, and learning capabilities in cogent and concise slideshows.

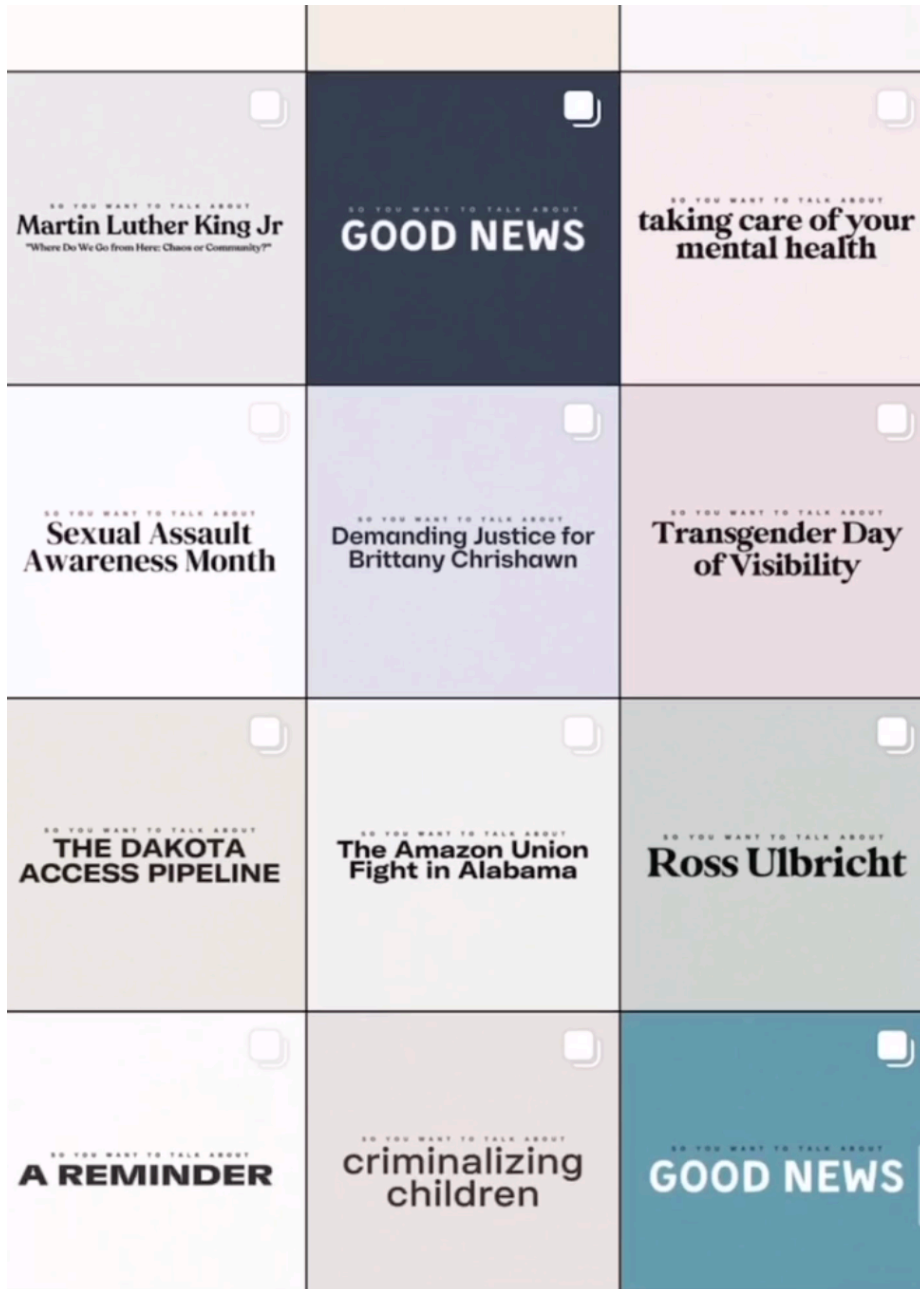
The So page is a jumping-off point for learning about a wide variety of topics - from the inner workings of the U.S. government to actionable steps you can take to make change.

On August 11, 2021, this account was renamed after receiving criticism for using a similar name to a Black activist-scholar Ijeoma Oluo’s 2018 popular book, *So You Want to Talk About Race*. The account came under criticism for being duplicitous and appropriative, as many people believed that Oluo ran this verified account (Willoughby, 2021). Co-researcher ZB, a young Black woman, clearly communicated her criticism of deceit but asserted that it was still important to use the slideshows on the account to demonstrate practical and accessible entryways into critical dialogue with others. She emphasized that young people needed an accessible starting place to feel like they could enter spaces of critical dialogue and action. She explained that she is very new to organizing and described how the design and simplicity of information made big ideas feel more accessible and introduced the academic or abstract language often

found in organizing spaces. Concerning their role in youth SPD, she shared, *“I think that these posts are intended for people who want to know how to help and how to be an activist/leader in resolving these issues and need to know where to start and how to take action.”*

Image 3

Photovoice Submission 16_2. Instagram. (So.Informed, 2021).



Increasing Accessibility of Critical Action

Participant-researchers cited various barriers to organizing and other forms of action. This included the COVID-19 pandemic, inaccessibility to information about opportunities for action, parent permission, transportation, and fear of risk or getting hurt at in-person actions. For example, co-researcher AJ, who is now very embedded in a variety of online and offline organizing spaces, said that social media posts like Image 4 helped her overcome barriers and access issues related to her experience as a child of immigrants. She shared

Being a child of immigrants, we just don't know where these opportunities are, and our schools don't really provide us with that, so we don't know of these opportunities and it becomes really hard to get involved.

She explained that she needed to be self-directed in seeking out opportunities to get involved in organizing. Social media provided her access to information and a supportive community where she could explore her ideas, opinions and get guidance about how to engage with local social movement activities.

Just having accessibility to any sort of connections has always just been hard for me. I haven't really known how to get involved until social media when it really started boosting like 'hey here's these sort of things that you can do to get involved', and I was like 'Okay, let me try this out' and figuring out what kind of things I liked as well.

Image 4

Photovoice Submission 12_62. Instagram. (Anonymous, 2021)



There were also multiple examples of Instagram stories like Image 4 (Anonymous, 2021). This story, from an account that will remain anonymous to protect participant-researcher confidentiality, shared a post about a youth-organized canvassing event created for a local abolitionist candidate in Seattle. The original post reads “*Another amazing weekend canvassing in the South End and NE Seattle! Thank you to [name of organizing collective redacted].*” Co-researcher MP shares this post to her stories, with additional information about how to get involved in future canvassing events. She also advertises ways that people can get involved, even if they can't go in person, “*Canvassing is also an awesome way to support if you have capacity and are physically able [smiling face with hearts] but zoom sessions are a great alternative if not (or do both [eyes]).*” She described the tone of the post as encouraging, and the researcher said that sharing images of the people there helped create a sense of community as well, which she felt was inviting.

Organizing spaces can be inaccessible to young people with disabilities. Co-researcher TF noted the inaccessibility of certain venues or physical spaces, but also embedded cultural pressures, norms, and ideas of what legitimate organizing is. However, they felt that social media could be used to challenge some of these ablest norms and problematize some cultural practices currently embedded in organizing spaces. They explored this using a series of Tweets captured and shared on a 19-year-old content creator's Instagram page, as seen in Image 5 (Anonymous, 2021). The west coast-based creator (they/them/she) has over 3,000 followers. Their page hosts many social justice slideshows.

Image 5

Photovoice Submission 10_142. Instagram & Twitter. (Anonymous, 2021).



Co-researcher TF described the images as,

The second slide is a tweet from the Democrat Socialists of America saying that "tweeting isn't organizing"; in the tweet, they are criticizing people whose only advocacy is through social media. The fifth slide is a counter to the DSA's post showing the effectiveness of online organizing; they were able to distribute millions of PPE and hospitals via social media. The sixth slide further criticizes the DSA for not taking steps to promote disability justice. The seventh slide provides insight from disabled folks:

many can't leave their homes because of COVID, are not able-bodied, have built a community online, etc. The eighth slide broadens the conversation to the ableism within all leftist organizations instead of just the DSA. The ninth slide reassures the viewer by emphasizing that you don't need to attend every protest; it is more critical to prioritize your well-being and safety.

Through a written reflection, they explained that they think this series of posts illuminates that,

...in many organizing spaces, you are pressured to participate in every protest and be on the ground 24/7. Last year, I felt a lot of pressure to be at each rally and devote my entire life/all of my time to advocacy. However, that affected my mental health, relationships with my family/friends, etc. This infographic emphasizes that you need to focus on and prioritize your well-being, which I feel a lot of advocates tend to neglect.

Also, many organizers shame others for their mode of activism (for example: DSA judging those who participate in advocacy on social media). This post reiterates that there are many different forms of activism; even if you're "only" advocating for an issue online, you can still create sustainable change. And, further, social media is the only accessible form of activism for many organizers.

Gatekeeping, Increased Exposure to Racist Violence & Unhealthy Boundary Setting

While the participant-researchers mapped out some ways that social media increases access to opportunities for critical consciousness development and action, they also uncovered some ways that social media perpetuates some aspects of gatekeeping from critical dialogue and organizations. Additionally they noted that increased access had adverse effects on youth SPD as well, including increased exposure to racist and other oppressive violence, and increased difficulty in setting healthy boundaries.

Gatekeeping

Social media helps people learn about critical theory, history, ideas, and movement spaces, but it may also contribute to gatekeeping. Numerous youth noted that while social justice slideshows, educational posts and videos, and other popular education tools on social media can

reinforce high expectations of learned knowledge for entry into racial and social justice spaces. Specifically, they mentioned how it positions knowledge as a currency of power and social position.

Participant-researcher TF was one of many youth who shared that they usually are *"Feeling pressure to enter conversations with your ideas clear and having arguments to back up what you are saying, and not entering until you have done that."* Co-researcher MO, who is newer to organizing, agreed. She shared that *"I'm fearful of not being educated enough to speak up on social media."* For her, that fear was rooted out of concern of perpetuating oppression, but also fear of making a widely public mistake.

I feel like whenever I speak upon social justice issues, I'm scared that I'm going to say something wrong about an opposing group of people, and that will hurt them in some sort. And then it will just become very bad. It's not like I've done it before, but I'm just really scared that that will happen, and it really changes the way that I talk about it.

That fear translated to getting involved in in-person spaces as well. Co-researcher TZ said that in reviewing comments and exchanges in threads, *"A norm of gatekeeping develops. If people can respond more quickly or use bigger words, they get some social power in those spaces as knowing more. It's cutting out people who don't already know a lot out."* Co-researcher AJ also described how the language, knowledge, and communication norms in online social justice spaces *"can be inaccessible especially for younger people."* She explained that this contributes to her struggle to process what she encounters online in dialogue with her Spanish-speaking family.

It's been kind of difficult to engage with them about it, especially in the context that a lot of the activists' language in English doesn't really translate well in Spanish.

She added that, “*It’s difficult to explain to my parents....*” and also that she struggles to connect with others in her family that are her own age as well, “*they speak Spanish so they don’t really understand half of the stuff I post.*” Her family is a very important sociopolitical learning space, so in this way, she feels that social media makes it hard to process the critical ideas, history, and terms online with some of the people she trusts the most to support her SPD.

Co-researchers MO and PK also noted the ways that social media can contribute to gatekeeping social spaces, ideas, and even identities, all based on a series of superficial, phenotypical, or stereotype-based considerations. Participant-researcher MO, who is biracial (AfroLatina and white), talked about how social media was an instrument for gatekeeping in connecting with AfroLatina communities online and offline. She described experiences of gatekeeping in her online communities, believing that her identity can be reduced to what can be seen through a set of curated images and text. She said she commonly receives comments online that reduce, stereotype, and erase her racial-ethnic identity.

They say ‘you doesn’t look or act like it, so others don’t know or say ‘ you don’t look Black’.

These experiences profoundly impacted her sense of racial belonging online and offline. She said these comments also affected the ways that she engaged with the BLM actions of 2020 – making her very concerned about people judging her authenticity, interest, and commitment to the social movement. She was very preoccupied with coming off as performative, let alone feeling any sort of support or empowerment from the movement.

Additionally, social media may reinforce other stereotypes and damaging narratives that act as barriers to SPD. In particular, the youth co-researchers noted that social media might reinforce myths about who is/isn’t an activist for those newer to organizing or activism. This

point is explicitly raised in Image 4 (analyzed in the previous section). Still, two co-researchers spoke to how cultural assumptions of what it means to be taking sociopolitical action were deeply embedded into virtual spaces and structures. For example, participant-researcher MO, who is new to organizing, used the term ‘influence’ in such a way that she made synonymous sociopolitical power, influencer, or verification status on the social media platform and number of followers. In reflecting on barriers to taking more action, she explained,

It's mostly because I don't have a sort of status, I would say. Mostly you see celebrities doing it, or like celebrities' children. But it's mostly people of that sort of build. But I've never seen a sort of normal, middle-class teenager actually do it. The only person I could think of is Greta Thunberg. She built that and I guess she influenced a lot of people too.

She later circled back to this point and asserted that it takes having social power to change people's minds and behaviors. She feels that social media influencers have the ability to make a broader collective impact in a way she does not. In addition to widely publicized public figures like Greta Thunberg, she gave the example of

I guess like influencers who are very, I guess perfect in a sense, speaking out about these things and saying stuff like 'oh support this cause, or something'. I don't know if you know this artist named Madison beer, but she's very known for her looks and she's been known to be having the perfect face or whatever. The perfect nose. And she had like a bunch of teenage girls envy her because of her looks. And there was this video or image of her that she posted of her holding up a sign during the BLM protests. And it said BLM or something. But I guess everyone was just like 'Oh, since she has a pretty face, then that means we should totally support the cause'. I don't know, but I feel like that's what people were thinking.

She concluded by sharing, “*this is why I say influencers have more of an impact on movements because they have so many followers and so many likes.*” Participant-researcher AK, who is

newer to organizing, added to this point. He said that he struggles to find a way to be more active “Because social media is so big, feels like you need to be comfortable with public speaking in order to be involved.”

Here the co-researchers are pointing to ways that social media may exaggerate the outward-facing social awareness or advocacy roles compared to more behind-the-scenes organizing roles and communicate the assumption that one needs to be a public figure with a significant social “following” to make a meaningful change. The perceived sociopolitical power of media and famous figures is not unique to social media, but social media may perpetuate those myths. Youth who are still trying to find their political voice may internalize these messages.

Increasing Exposure to Racist Violence, Prejudice, and Discrimination

With increased accessibility to public life comes increased exposure to racial violence. Youth co-researchers noted multiple ways that social media exacerbates racist violence in particular ways for youth of color. This collective emphasized this experience for Black and Asian youth, especially given the current BLM backlash and COVID-amplified anti-Asian racism. They highlighted issues of witnessing apathy and hate, enacting one’s trauma for the learning of others, and increasing ones’ risk of being racially targeted and retaliated against.

Co-researcher MP shared that as she got more involved in sociopolitical actions, such as the Black Lives Matter demonstrations, it was increasingly painful to see people’s apathy online, particularly from people she knew in school. She shared, “*It just made me feel crappy to see that living their life on their yacht while Black people were being brutalized in the street.*” She initially tried to engage her school friends,

And I would live stream on my page, and they would comment a lot of really gross racist things. After a couple weeks, I was burnt out from protesting, burnt out from trying to talk to people on

social media as well, people I used to call my friends. And I was like 'okay I sent you the resources, you are looking at them, but you're not understanding anything that they're saying... It's really hurtful.

Participant-researcher PK agreed and added that he feels a sense of disempowerment in that *“constantly hearing about sad things makes you sad and makes you not want to stay engaged”* and that seeing so many people on social media *“not really care”* made him feel disconnected from the issues and have a decreased motivation to continue doing transformative work with others. Participant-researcher MP explained that apathy from people she thought were her friends was a painful experience that led her to express that pain and anger in ways that she doesn't entirely feel are positive.

I was so mad after George Floyd was murdered because so many people didn't care, and I set so much of my energy not just being in the street, but also talking to people online and that was all that I did. I'm glad I dedicated myself to that work, but like I told you, it wasn't very productive because I was cussing people out and making myself madder and making other people madder. It was definitely an example of how social media is not helping transformative justice because it just escalates issues and, especially is harmful when people are not in the right mental space to engage.

While she didn't think that this way of engaging online was positive, she also noted that it played an important part in her social-emotional processes and development. It also allowed her to uncover some important truths that prompted her to draw different boundaries in her relationships with people and invest more in people she felt were invested in social transformation.

So I think that's been like super interesting because, when I did that, all those people were gone. Which was really helpful in terms of the social justice work, I was doing because Those people were

just actively against what I was doing and against the people that I was fighting for, including myself.

Participant-researcher AK (16-year-old immigrant African-American young man) who has recently become more interested in learning more about social justice and action shared that when he sees hateful comments on a post, he does not interact with it because he does not want increased proximity to it or fears that the racist-fueled attention may focus in on him if he were to publicly like, share or comment. Participant-researcher JU, a 14-year-old Asian bisexual woman, shared this experience and added that reading the comment section of these posts leaves her feeling disempowered and dissuaded to take critical sociopolitical action. She said that social media “*it provides some sense of satisfaction when I post something or I read something and learn more about something that’s happening in the world right now*” but that she feels less powerful “*when I read the comments section, when people on posts that I look at don’t agree with that post, or they don’t take it seriously or make racial insults.*” In addition to feeling a loss of empowerment and motivation, she shared that seeing racist comments online also decreased her engagement in offline community spaces out of fear. She reflected that witnessing a surge of anti-Asian racism online made her more fearful and cautious of building community outside her existing networks.

Co-researcher MP felt that while social media invites youth to share their personal experiences in meaningful ways, it also creates a norm of BIPOC organizers “*put[ting] their trauma on the line and describe[ing] how certain things work for people to learn.*” Using social media as a tool for collective critical consciousness-raising and organizing links antagonists with youth directly. As their network widens, the amount of hateful attention can be overwhelming. Furthermore, youth co-researchers noted the increased risk of being targeted by law enforcement

and hate or alt-right groups. Co-researcher MP pointed to ways that social media can act as a lightning rod for being targeted by racists online.

That's why a lot of organizers delete their Instagrams or take periodic breaks because it's just so tiring, social media and not just the person organizing. So I definitely think it is pretty harmful, especially when organizers get huge platforms. And then they're constantly being, especially Black organizers, being gaslit and targeted and traumatized every day because of racist comments or actions on their pages because their pages get so much attention. I think it definitely contributes to activist burnout.

Participant-researchers PK, AK, TF, and MP noted ways that social media increases a young person's risk of being targeted by law enforcement for hate groups or their participation in social movement activity. Multiple youth researchers brought up their concerns about being doxed. Doxxing is the act of searching the internet for an individual or organization's private information and releasing that information to individuals or organizations for reasons of mobilizing action against them. Doxxing can be used as a form of social protest, online shaming, and pressuring, and also lead to extortion and vigilante action. Co-researcher MP said BLM demonstrations would often be live-streamed, which increased the accessibility of the space for young people who could not attend in person for some reason. Still, this practice also increased protesters' risks of being identified and targeted by doxxing campaigns or law enforcement.

Participant-researcher AK, an African-American immigrant, said that he was hesitant to engage in sociopolitical spaces online because *"if someone doesn't agree with you he or she could invade your privacy by maybe leaking your address. They would dox you. You know, that happens a lot these days on social media."* He shared an example that happened two years ago when a young Mexican woman talked about immigration online, and a white man publicly

leaked her address to xenophobic groups and forums. He said, *“It made me kind of mad but at the same time nervous that it would happen to me at some point.”*

One co-researcher had been doxxed the previous year by a high school classmate who was part of an online alt-right group. They are very politically active in leftist movements and go to school in a largely conservative area. They shared the following story.

There actually was a situation at my school with me and my friend. He posted this TikTok video of this guy doing some sort of parkour backflip off of a building or something and landing on a trampoline. And so he captioned it because it was during the election, he was like 'oh, trump supporters, right now,' or something stupid like that.

And I commented on it 'oh haha,' whatever. I got so much backlash for that. You don't understand. Okay, so for context, this group of teenage boys at my school that pretty much are the [epitome] of MAGA trump supporter or whatever. I guess you could say. Not having any knowledge of politics or anything outside of that. But anyway, so they have this group chat with each other, and they pretty much send every kind of political thing that somebody else will post in their little group chat.

And so they all re-posted my comment on this post and were like, 'oh my God [name]'s encouraging people to kill themselves.' Yeah. And they were like 'so much for the tolerant left,' all like the stereotypical talking points or whatever. They literally contacted a bunch of organizations, they contacted [name of organization they work for] and a bunch of other things that I do, and they contacted our literal school And was like '[Name] is encouraging people to kill themselves,' which was not the intent of the post whatsoever. It wasn't even my post.

They added that the experience felt overwhelming and was worried about the short and long-term consequences of this event.

It was freaking scary. It was literally insane. Like, oh my God. Because literally really contacting everybody. They had their parents contact my mother. I don't even know how they got my mom's phone number. And it was insane. They're contacting school all this type of stuff.

It was legit so scary. I think I cried because I had a bunch of my friends texting me who were like, 'oh my god, [Name].' They were posting about how they were calling all these organizations and things that I was a part of.

In addition to fear of doxxing, some participant-researchers felt the pressure to try and mask their viewpoints or even identities to avoid discrimination in future opportunities. For example, PK, a 15-year-old multiracial (Black, Desi, and white) transmac youth, shared that he masks his gender identity to avoid potential discrimination from college sports recruiters. He shared, *“If you’re having DI coaches look at your Instagram, I don’t know how they will react to that. I mean I don’t know how many trans people have been on the women’s college basketball team. There’s still a lot of transphobia out there.”*

In summary, social media as a tool may increase the access for some youth more than others, or the ramifications of using social media as a tool for SPD may increase exposure to racial violence or discrimination and pose an increased risk for racial, gender, and sexually marginalized youth.

Unhealthy Boundaries

Eight out of twelve of the youth co-researchers noted that they struggled to set boundaries in some way, which can lead to adverse mental health outcomes and burnout in ways that negatively impact their SPD. They discussed the impact of social media’s pervasiveness, the experience of being overwhelmed by social media’s amorphous nature, and the sensational culture of social media overemphasizing conflict and crisis in a way that limits youths’ critical motivation, hope, and radical imagination.

Participant-researchers TF and PK noted that social media could contribute to a feeling of stress and pressure to keep up with everything. This pressure can lead to feelings of

powerlessness or burnout. Co-researcher TF talked a bit about this when discussing the Image 4.

PK agreed, adding that,

Like you want to be able to keep up with everything, but it's hard.
And then only being able to keep up with half of it makes me want
to be able to keep up with all of it.

But it is impossible to keep pace with a system that is so vast, fast, and ever-changing.


PK, a multiracial Black, Desi, and white transmasc youth, described how trying to keep up social media can make him feel tapped out, and that he feels a responsibility to engaging with others online *“Doing this type of emotional work [online] for free... which a lot of people of color or people, or of oppressed groups do, just like every day... setting those boundaries is important.”*

Co-researcher MP, a very active community organizer, described how it can be hard to figure out how to take a break and recharge when social media is always in your hand. Especially as she experiences intensely stressful situations at in-person actions or demonstrations and then comes home to scroll on social media as a way of re-charging, she described how complicated it could be when her source of entertainment, connection to friends, support systems, and important information is also a place of racial violence and traumatization (as described in the previous section).

That's why a lot of organizers delete their Instagrams or take periodic breaks. Because it's just so tiring, social media, and not just the in-person organizing. So I definitely think it is pretty harmful, especially when organizers get huge platforms. And then they're constantly being, especially Black organizers, being gaslit and targeted and traumatized every day because of racist comments or actions on their pages. Because their pages get so much attention. I think it definitely contributes to activist burnout.

Participant-researcher AK also discussed the challenges of amorphous boundaries on social media. He is a 16-year-old immigrant African-American young man who has recently become more interested in learning more about social justice and action shared that social media

has been helpful to his learning, but that it also increases the frequency with which he is exposed to racist ideas, hate comments and other violent content. This issue was discussed in the previous section. Still, he adds that through platforms like TikTok, he is exposed to damaging messages and hateful comments in a way that feels unpredictable, unexpected, and uninvited “*I never followed them in the first place. They might be on my for-you-page, you know everybody’s posts just [trails off]*” and that “*sometimes that can be filled with racist stuff*” and that you “*can’t really control it.*” He also said that even with posts that focus on the content he thinks is positive for critical consciousness and organizing, seeing “*hate comments people leave under people’s posts about social justice*” can “*stop someone from doing those stuff.*” It was challenging to set boundaries about what type of content you engage with on a social media platform where content is delivered to you based on an opaque algorithm. He could only report posts after being exposed.

Participant-researchers also noted that the degree to which social media emphasizes sensationalized conflict and crisis over success stories of transformative change could negatively affect their critical analysis by limiting their scope to see only what is not working and contribute to feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the racial, social and environmental issues they are learning about. Participant-researcher TZ illustrated this point by collecting a post made by a comedian and writer on Instagram, Caleb Hearon. It was reposted by a “UK based meme dealer” account @madeinpoortaste. Made In Poor Taste has over 1.5 million followers and has produced/reproduced over 10,000 posts. The post has over thirty-two thousand likes. TZ described their image,

It's an Instagram post of a tweet where someone is saying they have started lying to themselves to avoid confronting the stress that comes from seeing footage of environmental disasters and the like.

Image 6

Photovoice Submission 11_80. Instagram. (Made In Poor Tase, 2021).



While the post is a joke, they explained that they collected it to illustrate the truth underneath the humor.

Social media has made it so people are constantly confronted with disasters and bad news and things they don't want to see. This can lead to people being desensitized, not able to handle the constant bad news, being burnt out, to attempt to shut out the information or ignore it, or "lie to themselves" as this person says. This does the opposite of getting people involved. While people need information to get called to action and learn, too much information can push them away.

Discussion

Institutional forms of education in the U.S. have historically served to develop, sustain, and promote white, capitalist, cisheteropatriarchial, ableist, classist, xenophobic and other hegemonic perspectives (Alim et al., 2020). However, the YPAR collective demonstrated that social media may serve as a cool for increasing young people's access to anti-oppressive theories, communities, and practices. Youth examined how social media helped link marginalized youths' lived experience with anti-oppressive theories and helped break down complex ideas. Thinking back to the operationalization of SPD presented by youth researchers in chapter four, this can facilitate youth in proactively learning about themselves and social issues, learning histories of social movements and building a shared language for critical dialogue.

The YPAR collective highlighted that tools like social justice slideshows can act as an entryway into learning about racial and social justice. Almost all of the YPAR collective members expressed that they feel it is important to know information about an issue before taking any action, and that social justice slideshows can distill the important information in accessible ways. They described how the limited character counts of Twitter and alt-text can

similarly highlight the most essential information. For some, this gives them enough confidence to enter a dialogue and for others it acts as a catalyst for more self-directed research.

In these bite-sized and aesthetically pleasing formats that are easily sharable, youth are also able to participate in educating others or mobilizing others for the called-upon action. The social justice slideshows are made from templates that help youth be able to easily recognize, replicate and distribute important information (Leaver et al., 2020; Guerrero, 2020). They can help link theory and practice, see arguments or ideas manifested in their daily lives and can help youth build capacity for advocacy (Ledford & Salzano, 2022). However, it is important to note that while these qualities increase accessibility of critical learning, they can also lead to an oversimplification or reduction of complex issues, stories and experiences (this is explored in chapter six).

The YPAR collective also highlighted some of the ways that social media increased the accessibility of critical action. Social media creates opportunity for young peoples' political voices to be heard in public dialogue and deliberation, but youth also create their own culture of youth civic participation that may be invisible to people outside of youth culture (Dalghren & Alvares, 2013; Caron et al., 2019; Jenkins, 2009). They highlighted examples of social media increasing the accessibility of institutional political participation, as well as extra-institutional, participatory, and cultural political work. For example, Image 4 is a tool to help youth get connected with canvassing for a local abolitionist candidate and is an example of social media being a conduit for youth to get connected with visible, public sociopolitical participation. However, Image 5, a debate around the legitimacy of online organizing, is an example of youth constructing and engaging in meaningful public deliberation. It highlights that there are less

visible ways that youth influence public sociopolitical debate and action in that it shows youth and adults engaging with one another to challenge a culture of ableism in organizing spaces.

Gatekeeping & Boundary-Setting

While the YPAR collective highlighted some of the ways that social media increases access to critical consciousness development and action, it may also contribute to dynamics that act as barriers to SPD for youth. For example, they noted that while social media makes it easier to learn critical theories and build a shared language for dialogue, there are factors at play that also foster high expectations of already learned knowledge for entering racial and social justice spaces. For some of the youth newer to organizing, this assumed expectation kept them from asking questions, exploring issues or learning in a new community. For some of the more experienced organizers, they noted some of the ways that social media amplifies learned knowledge and a certain social justice language as a currency for power and social position.

As accessibility increases, so does the potential for an “infodemic.” Infodemic refers to the rapid and far-reaching spread of accurate and inaccurate information (such as facts, rumors, fears, reactions, opinions, etc.) about an event or issue. As the accurate and inaccurate information is mixed and dispersed, it becomes increasingly difficult to learn about that issue (WHO, n.d.). Oversaturation of information, paired with a distrust of information may contribute to some of the feelings expressed by youth researchers. A number of the YPAR collective members talked about feeling like there was too much information to wade through, and they felt stressed about keeping up.

A recent systematic review of literature on COVID-19 news consumption and mental health demonstrates that too much access to news can be detrimental to youth social, emotional, and

cognitive well-being. Young people have a limitless amount of information they can access, and recent studies have suggested that there is an increase in news consumption for young people today compared to recent generations (Strasser et al., 2022). Furthermore, people increase their news consumption after dramatic and traumatic events (Van Aelst et al., 2021; Strasser et al., 2022). This can lead to information overload and a high frequency of repetitive news checking, which has detrimental psychological impacts (Strasser et al., 2022). This may also lead to further promotion of sensationalized conflict or news about crisis over the news about successes of social movements. A number of YPAR collective members discussed how it can be difficult to maintain motivation and commitment to SPD when they are feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the racial, social and environmental issues they are learning about.

Furthermore, they noted that while increased access to critical news, events, information and stories is important for critical consciousness development, it can be distressing and exhausting for BIPOC and trans youth to be consistently exposed to racist and transphobic news, content and interactions. Racism and racism-related stress can manifest in unique ways on social media sites (Kaiser et al., 2018). There is unlimited access to unfiltered information, and youth interact with direct and vicarious racism more frequently than in offline spaces (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2016; Kaiser et al., 2018; Ferrara & Yang, 2015).

Some YPAR collective members said that they and others cope with this problem by becoming desensitized to it (as discussed with Image 6), while others expressed that they were struggling to process their anger, frustration, sadness, and find space to process and heal from what they experienced or witnessed. Previous studies have explored some of the ways that those outcomes adversely affect youth health and well-being and have noted that the negative toll of social media for racially marginalized youth is cumulative (Criss et al., 2020). And as

researchers MP, AK and others pointed out, it can be difficult to find space to process traumatic information, heal and assert boundaries when one's primary mode of communicating with friends, entertainment and their portal to organizing is embedded with social media. The youth researchers most commonly addressed this issue by curating their feed (i.e., only following accounts of others with similar values) and blocking content or users. This decreased some of the violent and oppressive interactions, but the youth co-researchers also explore how this limits SPD by creating echo chambers in chapter six.

Finally, with respect to critical action, for some members of the YPAR collective, social media reinforced the myth that organizers needed to already have significant social and cultural influence to affect change. They pointed to some of the ways that social media may exaggerate the outward-facing roles or the influence of public figures and social media "influencers." For some youth researchers, this made them question their authenticity as social change agents, and made them less certain of their power.

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Chapter 6

In the last chapter, the YPAR collective explored the ways social media increases access to opportunities for SPD, but that increased access produces both positive and adverse effects on SPD. Another essential contradiction, tension, or conflict between social media and youth SPD is around social media's effect on critical consciousness development.

Finding 2: Deepening Critical Awareness and Analysis →← Oversimplification, Reduction & Echo Chambers

They explored how social media served as a tool for deepening critical awareness and analysis in meaningful ways but that it also limited critical consciousness development through oversimplification, reducing issues, and producing echo chambers.

Deepening Critical Awareness & Analysis

In the last chapter, the YPAR collective identified how social media increased the accessibility of critical ideas, information, and spaces for action. In this chapter, the collective explores how social media deepening of critical consciousness and some of the social-emotional domains of SPD. This included: (1) deepening an understanding of, and connection to, issues through art and media, (2) identifying root causes, building shared language & linking sociopolitical issues, and (3) being a tool for critical self-reflection.

Deepening Understanding and Connection Through Art & Media

Participant-researchers MO, PK, TZ, and AJ noted how social media diversifies how young people can connect with information. One of these ways was the use of art and entertainment to deepen peoples' understanding and facilitate an emotional and sensory connection to an issue or idea. Co-researcher AJ highlighted an example that uses music,

narration, and visual art to share information about indigenous genocide and call viewers to action. She collected a minute-long TikTok video (Image 7) from a professional artists' account @janeyillustration (Janey Illustration, 2021). Janey Illustration is run by Janey Robideau. The account has over two hundred thousand followers, and its videos have over ten million 'likes' (Janey Illustration, n.d.). In the video collected by AJ, Labrinth's 'Forever' plays in the background as the artist records herself speaking. As she speaks, she creates a print of a cradleboard¹⁴. As she cuts from the linoleum block, she reads:

“When indigenous children in the U.S. and Canada were forcibly taken from their homes and put into boarding school, their hair was cut off, they were punished for speaking their languages, they were starved, and abused in the name of Christian ideology whose express intent was to ‘kill the Indian, save the child’. Many of the children in these schools ironically died. Sometimes their parents camped outside of the schools to be close to their children. You can see photos of this online. [music speeds up] We are only now in 2021 searching the grounds of these boarding schools for unmarked graves to try and bring these children home. Some of these bodies have been buried for more than 150 years. And some of the children were as young as three years old when they died. We’re already up to over a thousand bodies. How many more will there be?”

The post is accompanied by text promoting an upcoming sale of the print.

¹⁴ A cradleboard is a traditional protective baby-carrier used by many indigenous cultures in North America.

Image 7

Photovoice Submission 13_115. TikTok. (Janeyillustration, 2021).



This post had 4.1 million views, 1.3 million ‘likes’, and over 8,000 comments. The mood of the music is dark and ethereal but builds in energy as the artist is talking. The close focus on the linoleum block as it is being carved helps focus the viewer on the subject. While the text is powerful in and of itself, AJ used this video to highlight how social media can use music and visual aids to help youth understand a certain level of emotional experience and communicate inarticulable truths. She further explains that “*I choose to submit this post because I think art can be overlooked in the context of social media organizing. I think art is a very unique way to organize because it can really grab people's attention because of how deep and personal art can be. It's very personal and can create a lot of emotion and attention around an issue.*” Co-researcher TZ (and others as outlined in chapter 4) noted that “*emotions are important for gaining a broader understanding*” and that social media allows them to be able to connect more deeply with the holistic experience of an event, situation, or issue rather than just “the facts.”

AJ’s example effectively communicated the seriousness and humanity of an issue. Participant-researchers MO, PK, TZ, and AJ also collected samples of how humor and entertainment can also be a powerful vehicle for deepening one’s understanding of critical ideas. Participant-researcher AJ explained that “*Videos can be interactive, entertaining, and funny. [That] makes it more approachable and creative, which appeals more to younger people and can be used to uplift peoples’ voices.*” To speak to this idea, participant-researcher TZ collected a series of memes (Image 8) created as part of a youth-run political organization’s Instagram account for a local mayoral candidate’s campaign.

The account had just under 1,000 followers (Anonymous, n.d.). The series of memes, which had over 144 ‘likes’, was accompanied by the text, “*We’ve turned into a meme account*” (Anonymous, 2021). An internet meme is a captioned picture or video created, circulated, and

transformed by participants online (Phillips & Milner, 2017). The three images are of different memes created for the campaign. Each post takes an image from a popular movie or TV show and overlays a political message aligned with the scene. Memes are created by distilling complex yet recognizable issues into identifiable imagery and text. For example, in Image 8, the memes are light-hearted and funny, drawing from references to Star Wars, Spongebob Squarepants, and The Simpsons. However, they draw attention to local politicians' inaction around police brutality, the policy agenda of a local candidate, and a message that critiques the inadequacy of policy to address the climate crisis.

TZ reflected on how memes can use humor to circulate and cement important sociopolitical messages. They had access to the analytics of this account and noted that memes are very effective and well-received as well. They shared,

We've only ever made two meme posts with around six images in each post, and those both shot to the top of our most liked and posts with the most reach. I think this is a testament about how much young people like memes. These two posts contain political beliefs in a humorous manner which makes them easy to spread and cements the beliefs into the viewer.

Image 8

Photovoice Submission 11_68. Instagram. (Anonymous, 2021).



Identifying Root Causes, Building Shared Language, Linking Issues


In chapter 4, the youth researchers identified the process of building a shared language for engaging in critical dialogue, proactively learning about social issues, and learning histories of social movements as important parts of building capacity for critical analysis. In chapter five youth researchers identified how tools like social justice slideshows and education-focused accounts help young people access information about social justice issues, movements, and histories. Here, youth researchers demonstrate how social media can deepen young peoples' critical analysis and capacity for critical dialogue by helping them identify root causes, build shared language and link social justice struggles with one another.

Participant-researcher AJ, an experienced organizer, said that social justice slideshows like the series shown in Image 3 (Chapter 5), helped her develop a better understanding of root causes of social problems, and helped her link things she sees in daily life with some of the critical theories she is learning about. She shared that with posts like this,

I learned so much about how, specifically, the root causes of everything and seeing how everything was able to connect with one another through using specific terms and specific language. And more of the actual specifics of everything, rather than through me just talking with friends or community members and sharing similar feelings toward something. It got more nitty-gritty on the specifics.

She said that in this way, social media helped her develop language that allowed her to speak to broader ideas, values, and histories embedded into the conversations she is having with others.

Co-researcher JU highlighted an example of how social media can help people learn about the importance of language use, history, and impact, which in turn can foster deeper critical reflection and dialogue. She collected an Instagram post that dissects the use of the term

‘queer’ in LGBTQ+ communities (Image 9). The post was shared by an account run by an organization that aims to “*build up on diverse digital equity and to connect Asian, Native Hawai’ian and Pacific Islander LGBTQ+ communities across the globe*” (AsianAndLGBTQ+, 2021). The 9-slide post was accompanied by a description that reads “ *It is important that we understand the etymology of words that we use to empower ourselves. On this project we chose to focus on “Queer.” ⚡ “Queer Theory” is a project that is upcoming so stay tuned!! P.S. 🙌🏻 Tag a person in your life that may identify as Queer!*” The post also credited all writers, graphic designers, and social media managers.

JU is a bisexual, Asian, cis-woman. She reflected that these types of posts were very effective in helping her explore her identity and sociopolitical experiences related to identity. She asserted that “*social media helps you learn more about your sexuality, your race, your ethnicity, etcetera....*” Here she provided this post as an example of a way that social media helps her build knowledge and confidence to further explore the sociopolitical aspects of her Asian-LGBTQ intersectional community. She praised the effectiveness of this post for her own development, sharing that “*I learned new stuff about the LGBTQ+ community that I didn't know about before.*”

Image 9

Photovoice Submission 2 155. Instagram. (AsianAndLGBTQ+, 2021)



The youth co-researchers noted the ways that social media allows them to develop a deeper understanding of how issues are interconnected, be more proactive in learning about social issues and develop their own analyses. They collected data that highlighted social media's ability to connect the critical theory they are learning with *“real, in the moment examples that people can relate to and show how issues are interconnected”* (AJ). Co-researcher AJ demonstrated this point by collecting a series of TikTok videos that explored the interconnectedness of anti-Black racism and misogyny. Image 10 represents a screenshot from a video made by the TikTok account @amahlesthirdeye (no longer active) run by “social entrepreneur & activist” Amahle Ntshinga (Ntshinga, n.d.).

The video is two minutes and ten seconds long. She starts the video by acting out a conversation between two people. The creator plays both characters. She includes a written script over the video. It is written as follows:

Character 1: “Yt sup[remacy] is actually more destructive than mis0gyny.”

Character 2: [Says with doubting look] “But it’s the same thing!”

Character 1: “What?!”

Character 2: *“I think you’re trying to say that r@cism is worse than s#cism, but really it’s all 2 sides of the same coin...”*

[Creator introduces a poster with a aspects of oppression organized in a family tree format. At the top is White Supremacy.]

“So about 500 years ago a group of yt sups came up with this system that we have now, well call this system level 0.”

[Writes L0 next to WHITE SUPREMACY at top of tree]

“And then they cared about d0m[ination], control & power we will call that level 1.”

[Writes L1 next to text DOMINATION/CONTROL/POWER which is immediately underneath WHITE SUPREMACY]

“They way in which they maintain this d0m, c0ntr0l & power is via p@tri@rchy, r@cism, c@pit@lism, abl€ism & a couple of other things that I’m probably forgetting right now & we call that Level 2.”

[Writes L2 next to third level of tree, which lists PATRIARCHY, RACISM, CAPITALISM, ABLEISM side by side]

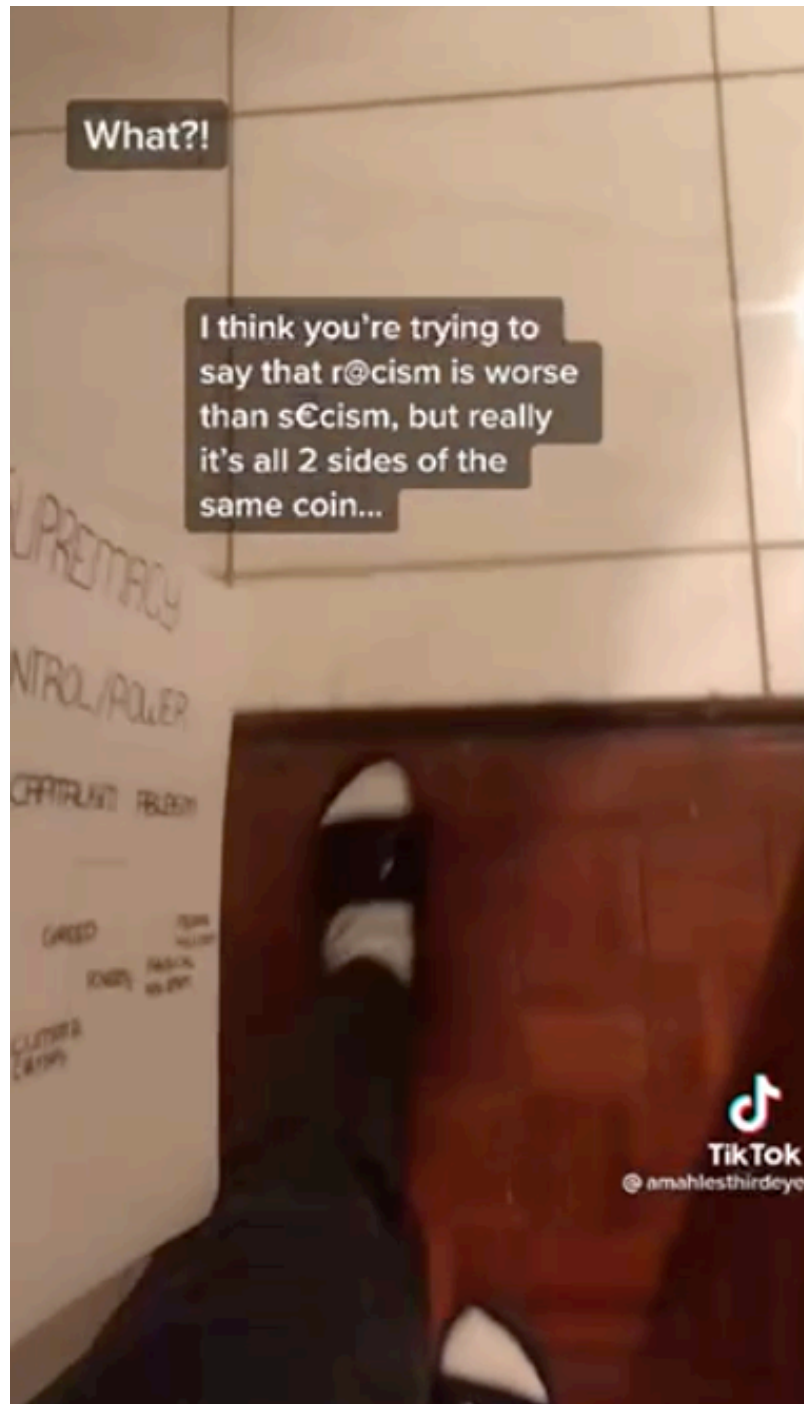
“& then underneath level 2, we have level 3 which are usually the things that we complain about & we all know these things I hope”

[Writes L3 next to next level of tree, which contains SEXISM, HOMOPHOBIA, COLORISM, RELIGION PHOBIA, GREED, POVERTY, PHYSICAL ABLEISM, MENTAL ABLEISM]

“So when we have discussions such as ‘pets>people, but casual r@cism isn’t a big deal’, ‘we need blk liberation but keep the g@ys away from me!’, ‘R@cism doesn’t exist, I’m poor & I’m yt!’ We are actually just slowing ourselves down because we’re all victims of the same system! But some of us can be hit by different sides of level 2, hence INTERSECTIONALITY!”

Image 10

Photovoice Submission 13_28. TikTok, n.d. 2021.



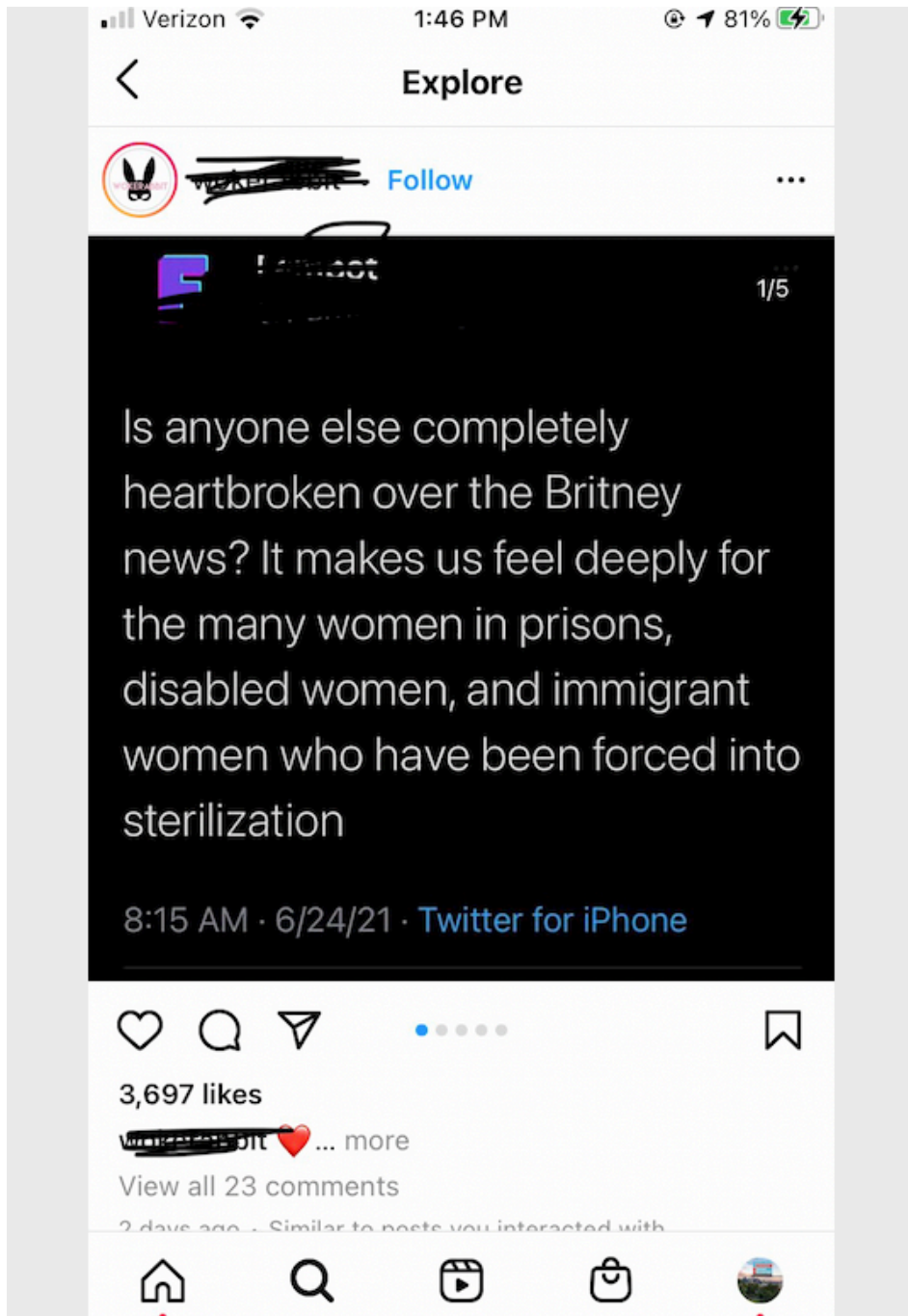
The video continues with various examples. AJ said this post “explains how all systems of oppression are connected” and was helpful for “*People trying to gain a clear understanding of how all these systems work to oppress us*” and that “*I choose to submit this post because it's a great explanation for why we should be working towards the liberation of all these systems because they all actively work to oppress us.*”

Participant-researcher TZ expanded on this idea by discussing how social media is uniquely positioned to help people connect theory with lived experience, link different struggles with one another, and use popular events to highlight draw attention to marginalized issues. They asserted “*Social media is interconnected, and so are social justice issues. Social media helps show that and link people to other issues.*” They collected and analyzed an Instagram post of a tweet, that helps politicize a popular culture event. At the time they collected this image, the court proceedings for Britney Spears’ conservatorship dispute was widely covered in popular media. TZ collected Image 11 to demonstrate how social media helped historicize and politicize the events so that youth can critically engage with the mass media that was covering their feeds. In their analysis they said,

I think this tweet exemplifies how social media is so interconnected. This tweet is connecting a topic with a lot of energy behind it with topics with far less energy behind them. This will lead to greater awareness and empathy for the later issues, and some people may go on to look more into those issues. I believe this often happens on social media, often more subtly where an individual will learn about one topic they care about and then as they surround themselves with conversations about that topic they see issues that align with the one they care about talked about in conversation, so they begin to surround themselves with also that second issue, and so on and so forth. I also think this way of connecting topics is good not only for the awareness but also for the empathy.

Image 11

Photovoice Submission 11_11. Instagram share of Twitter post.
(Anonymous, 2021)



Tools for Deepening Critical Self-Reflection

Finally, the youth researchers identified a variety of ways that social media deepens their critical self-reflection. For example, TZ ran the youth team's social media account for a local abolitionist candidate. They discussed the ways that being a content creator urges them to really research and think critically about community accountability before posting, because they know it will be sent out into a socially, politically, and culturally diverse world, "*I have to really do the research and find the sources and whatnot. And I guess, then I have a more nuanced understanding.*"

They also noted ways that social media facilitates humility by helping youth see how theories, values beliefs and priorities shift and change over time. Co-researcher JU, who recently had begun to explore issues of social justice, power, and oppression, reflected that social media allowed her to self-reflect on changes in her in both her own sociopolitical views, but also in sociopolitical conditions.

Cuz there's when you post stuff on Instagram, in the story, there's you've now saved it into your account, and you can go back on it and to review what you've posted and to see if there any changes like politically or socially.

This can help youth critically reflect on their own learning and growth, be more generous with others in their sociopolitical journeys, and reflect on social movement strategies. Participant-researcher JB added that being able to get insight into other people's political journeys over time is helpful to his own SPD as well. Particularly he felt that social media allowed him to see examples of how ones' politics and critical action strategies can develop, grow and change over time without losing one's commitments to critical ideals.

Like my friend, who honestly I kind of like really admire... she graduated [redacted university name] this year. She's an environmental engineering major and she's this very radical mutual aid organizer. And she consistently will post very anti-imperialist, pro- mutual aid, very abolitionist things on her Instagram. And she's one of the very few people her age, I still see do that, because people her age are either now fully committed to the establishment political path or they stop posting about politics because they don't care or they're done with it now that they have a career. But she's one of the very few people who still do the radical postings and it's because she's not tying her survival to politics, which is a whole question for me that I think about a lot.

Seeing her journey helped him reflect on his own SPD to date, but also think critically about how he will integrate (or not) his sociopolitical work with other aspects of life (e.g., his career). Social media allowed him to see how professional organizing impacted the quality of peoples' social justice work, and reflect on how he wants his relationship with organizing to look as he enters a new phase of life.

Oversimplification & Reduction of Issues, Ideas & Identities

While social media may facilitate a deepening of ones' social awareness and critical analysis, it simultaneously contributes to the reduction and erasure of complexity in issues, histories, identities, and critical actions in a way that limits SPD. This included: (1) oversimplification, (2) learning in echo chambers, (3) limiting action strategies, and (4) reduction of critical racial and social identity development.

Oversimplification

With respect to critical analysis, participant-researchers MO, KS, TF, MP, and JB all discussed some of the ways that social media can lead to an oversimplification of important, complex, and nuanced issues. For example, co-researcher MP discussed the account that ZB had collected and analyzed in chapter five (Image, 3). She noted that while social justice slideshows

like that one can be really important access points, “bubbling issues down into infographics is really harmful and can be seen as erasure because you are minimizing someone’s whole experience into a stupid canva graphic.” Sometimes substance is sacrificed for concise and aesthetically inviting content.

Participant-researcher TF collected various other examples of ways that information on social media makes information simple and digestible, but also lead to superficial or incomplete understandings, though youth may feel like they are getting a very detailed lesson or perspective. One example was a set of posts created by the Instagram account @anti.capitalist_. The public account has over 180,000 followers and over 2100 posts. The profile header reads, “⚡*Lazy ignorant commie with no basic understanding of economics or politics! /s* ❤️*Anti-Fascism, Racism & Capitalism.*” In Image 12, they highlighted a five-slide set of posts that looks at the relationship between capitalism and the climate crisis. The post description reads “Via @chicksforeclimate #capitalism #anticapitalism #climatechange.”

TF shared that,

By outlining how the abuse of capitalism affects our Earth, this post strengthens users' understanding of the climate crisis and dismantles outdated notions. However, this post is largely simplified and lacks nuance, so it could also negatively influence people's sociopolitical development.

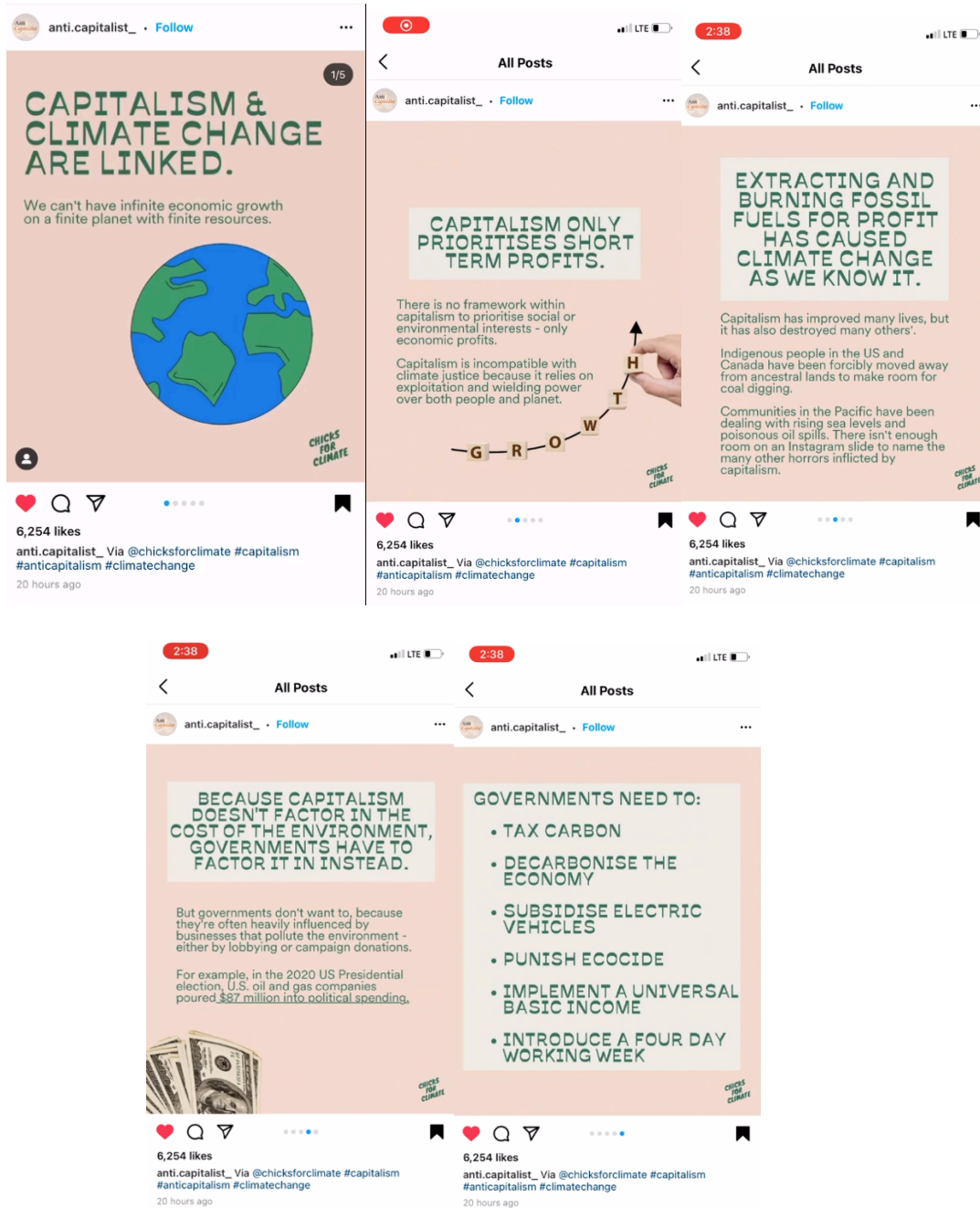
They said that posts like these intend to be helpful, and can be, but do not provide the full picture or fully lay out what some of the concepts are. The series of posts starts out by making a clear argument, “*capitalism & climate change are linked,*” and lays out a number of claims to support this argument across the following four slides. This includes (1) a supporting argument that capitalism and climate change are incompatible, (2) a note on extracting and burning fossil fuel

for profit accompanied by notes on forced removal of indigenous peoples and communities facing rising sea levels, (3) claim that governments should be responsible for intervening, along with claims about how governments are influenced by private company interests, and (4) a list of what governments should do that cover carbon tax, decarbonizing the economy, subsidizing electric vehicles, punishing ecocide, universal basic income, and a four day work week.

TF observed that there were many important ideas and claims in this post, but that it felt like too many ideas were introduced at once, and that it was glazing over several issues without enough context. This can lead to “shallow” understandings of the issues and possible solutions, but possibly make youth feel like they are getting a more comprehensive education than they really are. They added that shallow and simplistic overviews of complex issues can “*damage young people's sociopolitical development*” but also have compounding effects as people share aesthetically pleasing, but superficial posts like this “*because their followers end up reiterating an incomplete picture.*”

Image 12

Photovoice Submission 10_141.Instagram. August 28, 2021.



Echo Chambers

With respect to increasing social awareness, youth researchers noted that social media may limit SPD as much as it helps deepen SPD. Participant-researchers JU, TF and TZ noted the ways that social media contributes to “echo chambers” in a way that youth are less proactive about seeking out information, and social media may contribute to a feeling they are getting a more comprehensive perspective than they really are. All of the youth researchers reported that they mostly come across content that they agree with, and rarely interact with content that is far from their sociopolitical views. Co-researchers PK and TZ gave examples of times they sought out opposing views, but for the most part the youth researchers explore from sources they have already followed, or sources that are suggested to them based on the user algorithms. This seemed to be true of youth researchers who were newer to sociopolitical work, and those who were more experienced. For example, participant-researcher JU who is new to exploring issues of consciously social justice noted that her primary way of seeking out information is to draw from people she knows and to go off Instagram’s suggested content.

I just go through what Instagram suggests for me, because it's usually just some recommendations of reading or drawing references and stuff. That's what they suggest to me. But sometimes I go on other people's stories.

It is important to note that none of the youth researchers asserted the importance of ‘hearing all sides’ of a social issue. They were not concerned with contemplating more status quo or oppressive ideas, but rather wanting more diversity in critical and marginalized perspectives on an issue. JU explains that even though the repetitive lessons and insights are important, and in fact the repetitiveness may help cement the ideas, she also feels like it is incomplete and that

there are likely other marginalized or important critical perspectives that would be important to consider.

For example, if you see positive posts or awareness posts and the full picture, it's still only getting a single story. It helps you learn, and you learn to develop opinions, but if you only see a single story.

Participant-researcher TF, who is a very experienced organizer agreed that the news and information they come across on their social media is “*curated*” and “*tends to be unidimensional.*” They said it is great for “*affirming what you already think*” but that it does create an “echo chamber” of ideas which limits the depth and breadth of their learning about power, privilege and oppression.

Multiple youth researchers notes that a dominant critical perspective emerges as a result of this. Participant-researcher JB described witnessing camps of thought developing around emerging issues, ideas, and conflicts, like the Free Palestine movement. He talked about how he was supporting the movement by attending Free Palestine protests, but that during those actions some questions emerged for him. However, he said he felt hesitant to voice his questions or concerns because he is uncertain about what questions may be harmful and norms around accountability are not always generative, “*It’s hard to ask questions about things you are unsure about in such a public space.*” He worried about “*playing into problematic or dominant narratives*” or “*receiving backlash.*” He said that he feels that social justice calls for him to “pick a side,” but that sometimes the ‘side’ he supports is lacking nuance in a way that helps him stand firm in his stance. He said that he sees himself and others navigating this by assessing how others engage with the social media content on that issue. He said he leans on how many people like or make affirmative comments, and who those people are, to shape his thinking. In this way

he feels like social media plays off feelings of insecurity and his desire to be socially connected and cohesive to his peers, resulting in him being a bit less proactive and critical in developing his own awareness and analysis.

Compounding this issue, it may be critical white narratives that dominate online spaces. Co-researchers TF, TZ, MP, AJ, and ZB noted that while social media can be a tool for disseminating and deepening BIPOC knowledge, with, by, and for BIPOC youth, this system of activity within social media maintains white dominant narratives in particular. TF, MP, and AJ noted that while user engagement is likely one driver of how certain stories or perspectives become dominant, the social media platform itself also contributes to this. Participant-researchers noted the role of platforms like TikTok and Instagram shadowbanning, de-activating or freezing their accounts, posts or stories being reported and then taken down, and other forms of censorship. TF explains this practice can target content that is deemed to be “controversial” or “upsetting” and disproportionately affect “the sociopolitical content of trans, Black, Brown, and indigenous content centered on injustice.” They added that “*By suppressing posts, Instagram furthers the echo chamber since people will not interact with “upsetting” content and will not have to challenge their beliefs.*”

Limiting Strategies for Action

Participant-researcher KS noted that oversimplified ideas lead to ineffective action. They said that posts like the one analyzed by their co-researchers (Images 3 & 12) can contribute to an oversimplified understanding of the issues and theoretical solutions, but also limit peoples’ understandings of how to organize and take action.

Its toned down in that people just post it up, and you can read the post, you can like the post, you can repost the post, but that's really all you can do with it. It's being reduced to a few words on a

screen, when we forget that it's an entirely deeper organization of fighting against various things.

As a result of this, and other factors, participant-researchers JU, TF, TZ, MP, AJ, and JB all felt like social media shaped critical action in ways that were limiting to SPD. They noted that social media can contribute to actions that are unsustainable, short-lived or are even performative.

To highlight the need for more depth in understanding social media's role in critical action, AJ collected a forty second TikTok made by @mistercapehart. They describe themselves as "7th Grade Teacher 🏳️‍🌈 they/them Black, Queer & Concerned w/ Freedom." Their biographical page also describes them as "a nationally acclaimed poet, speaker, host, educator and community organizer." They have over 200,000 followers and their videos have over three million likes. Attached to the post, the description reads "Mobilization & Organization are both necessary in movement work, but their difference has to be clearly understood! #abolition #fyp 🏳️‍🌈 #blm." In the video, Mr. Capehart looks straight into the camera and talks to the audience. Captions are included.

Alright baby, Let's talk about the difference between mobilization and organization. To mobilize means to get something moving. To encourage action around a particular issue. Most of the time that means getting people who are already agree with you off the couch and actually doing something. Mobilization gets people to the picket line, to the protest, to the polls, to donate money or resources to a cause they care about. The summer of 2020 saw one of the greatest mobilizations of people worldwide against police brutality, but as we saw, mobilization on its own, regardless of how impressive, changes little without organization. To organize means to arrange resources and build structures around the lives of people within a community. Not only inspiring those who already agree to action, but also expanding the number of people for a cause through education and empowerment.

AJ explains,

I choose to submit this post because I think it's very relevant to the conversation around social media organizing. I think we can see examples of how social media can aid in both mobilization and in organization. Social media is a huge powerhouse in terms of mobilization. We can see this through the way certain videos can get thousands of views on Instagram, how informational graphics can get thousands of likes on Instagram, how Twitter and other platforms helped bring hundreds of people out on the streets during Summer of 2020. But these were merely just mobilization tactics. For the most part, none of these things created lasting change.

Image 13

Photovoice Submission 13_120.TikTok August 1, 2021.



Reduction in Racial and Social Identities. In addition to the problem of oversimplifying critical learning and action, multiple young people noted that social media can be damaging to

critical racial and ethnic socialization (an important part of SPD) as well. They noted the ways that online, they feel that their identity can be reduced to what can be seen through a set of curated images and text, and online comments that have adverse effects on SPD. Participant-researcher JB noted that he thinks about his identity in different ways online than in person, whereas online he thinks about it more in terms of how others see him than how he sees himself.

When you're online you don't really get that much of a vibe of a person, and therefore it's less personal. And interacting with people is less personable or whatever. And so, then you'll latch onto someone's 'on paper' identities more perhaps. So when you're dm'ing someone, I categorize these people as like Black, straight, man. Whereas in person I categorize the same person I'm thinking of as extroverted, nerdy, or something like that. Just more about their personality, what they're like, or how their voice, their mannerisms more so. I think the fact that you can't do that online makes it so you latch on to a person's race more you're talking to them.

He noted that this is not necessarily a bad thing for SPD, as it is important to center identity in critical learning and action, however, he did believe that social media contributes to an oversimplification of racial and other social identities based on superficial factors. He is biracial, Korean, and white and said that *for a period of time, social media made me question my identity, like maybe I'm just white if I look this way.*"

MO, a multiracial AfroLatina and white researcher, said she commonly receives comments online that reduce, stereotype and erase her racial-ethnic identity. She gave multiple examples of how social media perpetuates stereotypes of AfroLatinas and reinforces cultural standards she cannot meet. As a result, she feels criticized or scrutinized by communities of color and white communities online. She shared that she has had her Black identity experience challenged by others online *"they say 'you doesn't look or act like it, so others don't know or*

say ‘*you don’t look Black.*’ She also talked about how she felt like she has not been able to connect with the AfroLatina community online,

When I’m with people who are the same race as me, I feel like I don’t belong sort of cuz I feel like I’m too white. Like I’m very light-skinned I don’t look like a typical one that you would see. It just has me questioning my appearance and actions.

However, she also feels stereotyped and alienated by white people on social media.

I don’t know it’s always comments about my hair. And my friends are like ‘aren’t you aren’t you happy about your identity’ like ‘don’t you want to embrace your heritage?’ and I’m like not if it’s always out and unobtainable.

When asked what she meant by ‘unobtainable’, she described how social media perpetuates stereotypes about what it means to be AfroLatina, and that her authenticity is gauged, both by others and sometimes herself, on those standards.

It’s just my hair. Like it’s just my hair, because I always straighten it. I always braid it, but I never leave it out in its natural way because, I don’t know, it’s it doesn’t look like me. It’s very, it’s very big. And I always get comments about how ‘your hair is so thick, how do you how do you manage this?’. And I try not to, that’s the thing I. I just straighten it, and then I braid it and I just put it up or something, because I don’t want people to like comment about it.

I would say cuz a bunch of people of color tend to like have a bunch of like hair designs and braids and different types of braids and all that and and I don’t do that because I guess I don’t want to do that, to my hair but. um I guess people have gotten the image where Afro-latinas or something always have curly hair... or very like I don’t know what to call....When it’s really wavy but I forgot what it’s called

These experiences profoundly impacted their sense of racial identity development and belonging, both online and offline. She said these comments also affected ways that she engaged with the Black Lives Matter actions of 2020, making her very concerned about people judging her

authenticity, interest, and commitment to the social movement based on her perceptions of how others see or interpret her observable characteristics.

So when the BLM movement started it was like should I participate or not. Would they think that I'm just full on white? would they think that just cuz I straighten my hair, that I shouldn't be allowed to be a part of this movement? And I don't know. I didn't really have that much of an inclusive experience with BLM.

She was very preoccupied with coming off as performative, let alone feel any sort of support or empowerment from the movement.

I went to a couple protests and that was it. I feel like I just be that one white girl that tries to get included in this popular movement, just because she wants attention, even though I don't even have a social media platform, so how can I really get attention? But yeah, it was kind of like a mixture between those those two [referring to her multiple racial-ethnic identities] because I've always been really light skin.

AJ, who identifies as white Latine noted that having her identity challenged on social media isn't necessarily a bad thing for SPD.

Because I think that it's important to challenge other members of the Latinx community to recognize their privilege and I think that's something super important and not necessarily a bad thing. So, I think that has been something really important that has been happening, especially a lot, I see it, a lot for me personally, through TikTok because that's my preferred way of media. But that's how I see my identity being challenged, but I don't necessarily think it's a bad thing.

I think some of the TikTok videos that I've seen are of indigenous people in Latin America who say like 'oh hey white Latinos, obviously, you have some marginalized identities, but you also have to recognize that your whiteness helps you live in a society that's just filled with white supremacy. So, to the white people that you're around they don't necessarily see you as Latinx. They see you more as white. So therefore, you'll have more privileges than someone who is let's say Mexican but also comes from African

descent. So those are the kind of challenging videos I've seen in my social media.

However, she did agree that social media contributed to an added emphasis on phenotypical aspects of racial and ethnic socialization in a way that could adversely affect someones' SPD.

Discussion

In this chapter the YPAR collective explores how social media can increase youth capacity for critical analysis, deepen social awareness, and engage some of the social-emotional aspects of critical consciousness development. This included using art and entertainment to deepen understanding and connection, helping youth link root causes and struggles with one another, and providing tools for critical self-reflection.

Art and popular media have always been an important part of perpetuating and challenging hegemonic narratives (Gramsci, 1971; Hall, 1977). Social media introduces a more democratic and popular form of media that can serve to reinforce, amplify and shape personal and social transformation in a variety of ways. On a personal level, social media-based art and entertainment can affirm or validate marginalized experiences, values, and ideas. Due to the reparative and viral nature, it does so on a mass scale as individual posts, stories and videos aggregate to help youth see that they are connected to a community of others with shared perspectives (Mina, 2019). In thinking back to the conceptualization of youth SPD offered by the collective in chapter four, this contributes to a variety of their operational themes, such as: building confidence in oneself and self-love, learning in community dialogue, and building a shared language for dialoguing about lived experience & critical theory, perspective-taking, and centering identity without centering individuals. Furthermore, social media allows for a diversity of source types and forms. This may allow deeper expression of very complex experiences, phenomena, or ideas. In chapter 4 the YPAR collective discussed the importance of integrating

the social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of youth SPD. Social media-based art and entertainment serve as an outlet for public self-expression and also for deepening our understanding and connection to an issue.

The YPAR collective also noted the ways that social media helps them identify root causes of issues, see critical theory in everyday life and connect struggles with one another. This was explored some in chapter five when talking about the ways that social media makes social awareness and critical analysis more accessible. In this chapter, the YPAR collective notes the ways those same instruments (social justice slideshows, comment threads, hashtags, etc) guide youth in linking ideas, dialogues and struggles. One aspect of this was being able to explore and reflect on ones' identity in a networked space that helps you link your experiences with those of others. This contributes to youth gaining a deeper understanding of themselves and social justice struggles, but also exploring their identities in affirming communities. In chapter 4, the YPAR collective noted how important it was to center identity in self/social transformation for SPD, but to do so in a way that is not overemphasizing individualism. Social media is a space where youth can center identity (their own and others they learn from) in a way that helps youth link personal experience with collective experience.

The YPAR collective also saw social media as a tool for critical self-reflection of one's own SPD, and how they have changed over time. As JB noted, social media can also be a tool for observing and learning from other peoples' SPD journeys as well. Here youth point to the ways that social media can serve as a tool for metacognition of the critical consciousness development process. Metacognition is a form of higher order thinking that actively monitors, regulates and controls cognitive processes in learning (Perfect & Schwartz, 2002). Metacognition has a positive relationship with increased learning success, problem solving, and can support youth in

better understanding themselves and others (Perfect & Schwartz, 2002; Yzerbt & Dardenne, 1998). This supports youth in being more proactive in their learning, and giving them more agency in their SPD.

However, the YPAR collective also found that social media contributes to the oversimplification of complex issues, reduction of identities and experiences, and echo chambers, all of which limit youth SPD. Youth researchers also noted that while things like social justice slide shows (explored in the last chapter) make social awareness and critical analysis more accessible, they also oversimplify complex social issues. Youth researchers also processed the way echo chambers were formed and sustained on social media, and how this may limit critical reflection and other aspects of critical consciousness development. More recent studies of echo chambers have shown that social media can actually be a tool for escaping environments where people are only encountering views that reinforce their own (Iandoli et al., 2021). Furthermore, studies have suggested that having exposure to diverse viewpoints may not necessarily be effective for sociopolitical dialogue, as people have various motivations for being selective about their political information (Shapiro, 2013; Bail et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2017; Levendusky, 2013). Nonetheless, the youth researchers in the YPAR collective commonly cited this as a limitation to SPD. This raises questions about what the impact of echo chambers are on critical consciousness, critical action, opportunity structures and social-emotional aspects of SPD.

In particular, it raises questions about how certain critical or anti-oppressive perspectives are amplified. One of the co-researcher, JU, referenced a TedTalk done by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie about the danger of single stories. In that talk she says “*the single story created stereotypes and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are*

incomplete. They make one story become the only story" (Adichie, 2009). The YPAR collective highlighted ways that "single stories" still develop within communities that are committed to anti-oppression and social justice work. Social media may exacerbate this problem by amplifying very few critical perspectives or obfuscating the source of critical content in such a way that white voices may continue to dominate critical narratives without users being able to track

Youth saw issues of oversimplification and the emergence of dominant narratives adversely affecting organizing strategy. Youth researchers noted that oversimplified analyses of social problems may lead to oversimplified social change strategies. AJ noted that social media is a very effective mobilizing tool but may limit young organizers' imagination for other organizing strategies.

Finally, youth reflected on some of the ways that social media adversely affects racial and ethnic socialization. Social media plays an important role in youth social and identity development (boyd, 2014; Davis & Weinstein, 2017). It can act as a source of information about race, a place where people can connect with identity-based communities and is a means of identity expression (Chan, 2017; Senft & Noble, 2014; Tynes et al., 2011; Grasmuk et al., 2009). However, little research has examines how social media affects youth identity development, especially racial-ethnic socialization (Chan, 2017). The YPAR collective identified a number of ways that social media supports critical social identity development (which will be explored in future manuscripts), but also suggested that social media may negatively impact racial-ethnic socialization in a way that is negative for marginalized youth SPD. The YPAR collective will explore this more in a future manuscript that focuses on identity, but more participatory research with youth of color on the issue of social media and racial-ethnic socialization is needed.

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Chapter 7: Conclusion

In chapter one, I discussed the insight of the late great bell hooks, who highlighted that marginality produces counter-hegemonic discourse and is a site for radical transformation. Marginality “offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds.” (p.341). In the U.S., children and youth are pushed to the margins of sociopolitical society. Youth are excluded from many institutional forms of sociopolitical participation, and their voices are largely absent from the public discourse. When youth are included in public life, they are often monitored, censored, tokenized, or not taken seriously in decision-making. This is especially true for youth with other socio-politically marginalized identities (i.e., youth of color, LGTBQIA+, immigrant and refugee, disabled youth, etc.).

However, from their position on the margins, youth develop a unique insight into some of the most complex social, cultural, and political challenges and can help construct alternative ways of thinking and doing to address those problems. Youth develop ways of resisting and circumventing the forces that push them to the margins. In doing so, they develop a keen understanding of how those forces work and how to transform oppressive structures in our society. This knowledge can be embodied in their thinking, ways of being, actions, and emotional and sensory experiences.

This multi-site case study explored the complicated and ambivalent relationship between social media and youth sociopolitical development. The overarching research questions were: (1) In what ways does social media facilitate youth sociopolitical development, and (2) in what ways does social media limit, or even act counterproductive to, youth sociopolitical development? In

using a participatory action research approach, adolescents' folk theories, lived experiences, and diverse forms of knowledge were moved from the margins to the center. Their insights pave the way for youth, youth workers, educators, and social service providers to address how social media adversely affects youth SPD and transform social media into a tool of social transformation and youth liberation.

I used case study and virtual photovoice research methodologies to address these questions. The multi-site case study approach can be considered independent but parallel research projects. The same research questions and general study design applies to each "site." A "site" for this project is the co-researchers own experience. However, there will be unique adaptations and deviations in methodology and protocol according to what came up with that youth co-researcher (Yin, 2018). I selected a multi-site case study because it is compatible with participatory research's need for adaptability from researcher to researcher. It also allowed us to highlight the nuance and complexity of each young person's sociocultural experience online and put those unique paths in conversation with each other and with our broader online and offline cultures.

A diverse set of rich data sources is an essential feature of the method (Yin, 2018). As a collective, we utilized surveys, semi-structured interviews, and reflexive writing/memoing (both myself and the youth co-researchers). We also used photovoice to incorporate images and videos. Photovoice is a PAR process that uses visual research methods to collect, analyze and disseminate research findings (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 1999). When paired with narratives, images offer a unique way of describing everyday activities and people's understandings of space, place, and relationships. Visual research methods can be valuable tools for opening up critical dialogue and allows for multiple ways of knowing and sensing to be incorporated (i.e.,

memory, emotion, sensory). Photovoice is also cited as a tool for critical consciousness development in and of itself and makes space for researchers to collaboratively identify opportunities for action (Wang et al., 2000; Wang & Hannes, 2020; Carlson et al., 2006; Rose, 2014; Roberts, 2011; Happer, 2002; Riddett-Moore & Siegesmund, 2012; Pauwels, 2015).

First, the YPAR collective critically examined our assumptions and theories of youth SPD. We collaboratively identified and operationalized the key domains of critical consciousness, critical action, and social-emotional development. They also identified a series of opportunity structures, including schools, family, social media, community groups, and other intergenerational relationships. This conceptual work serves as an anchor for the subsequent YPAR project. Using the photovoice, interview, survey, observational, and recorded dialogue data, the YPAR collective identified nine sets of tensions, conflicts, or contradictions that speak to the ways social media facilitates and limits youth SPD. This included the interrelated issues of (1) accessibility, (2) critical consciousness development, (3) identity development, (4) transparency & visibility, (5) conflict, (6) emotional & mental health, (7) movements & organizing (8) empowerment and (9) relationships. This dissertation outlines the first two sets of issues: accessibility and critical consciousness development. These were chosen to be highlighted first because youth felt that the themes cut across other issues and were among the most prevalent tensions they work through.

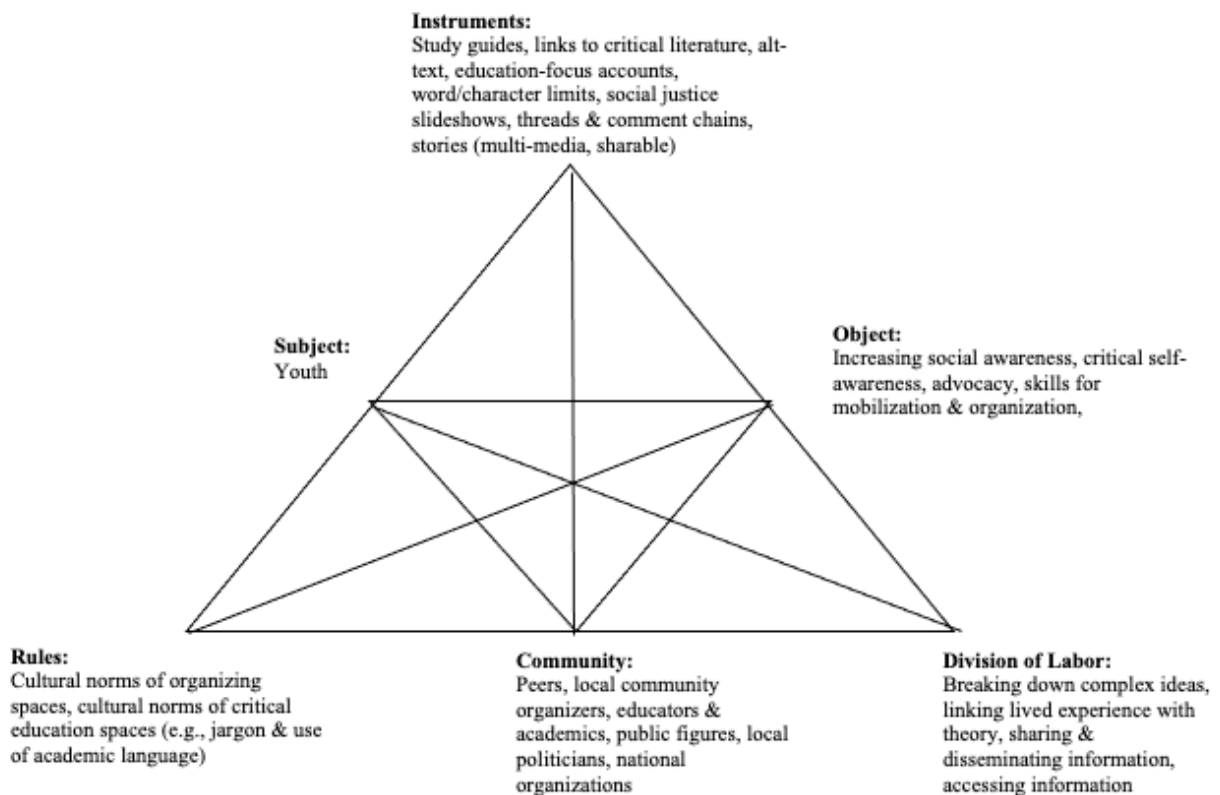
Accessibility

Using the conceptual model of SPD laid out by the YPAR collective in Chapter 4 (see Table 2 for summary), we identified various that facilitate and limit youth SPD. Chapter five focused on issues relating to accessibility. As outlined in Chapter 2, the cultural-historical activity theory model is a helpful analytical framework for understanding their results. This

model identifies the way that subject, instruments, rules, communities, and the division of labor interacts to affect an objective (critical consciousness, critical action, social and emotional domains, etc.) and outcome (youth SPD) (Engeström & Sannino, 2010; Engeström, 2001). In the results outlined above, youth identified a series of actions between youth, social media instruments, community, rules, and division of labor. They are summarized in Figure 6, a diagram that uses activity theory to demonstrate the YPAR collective’s observations on how social media increases the accessibility of youth sociopolitical development.

Figure 6

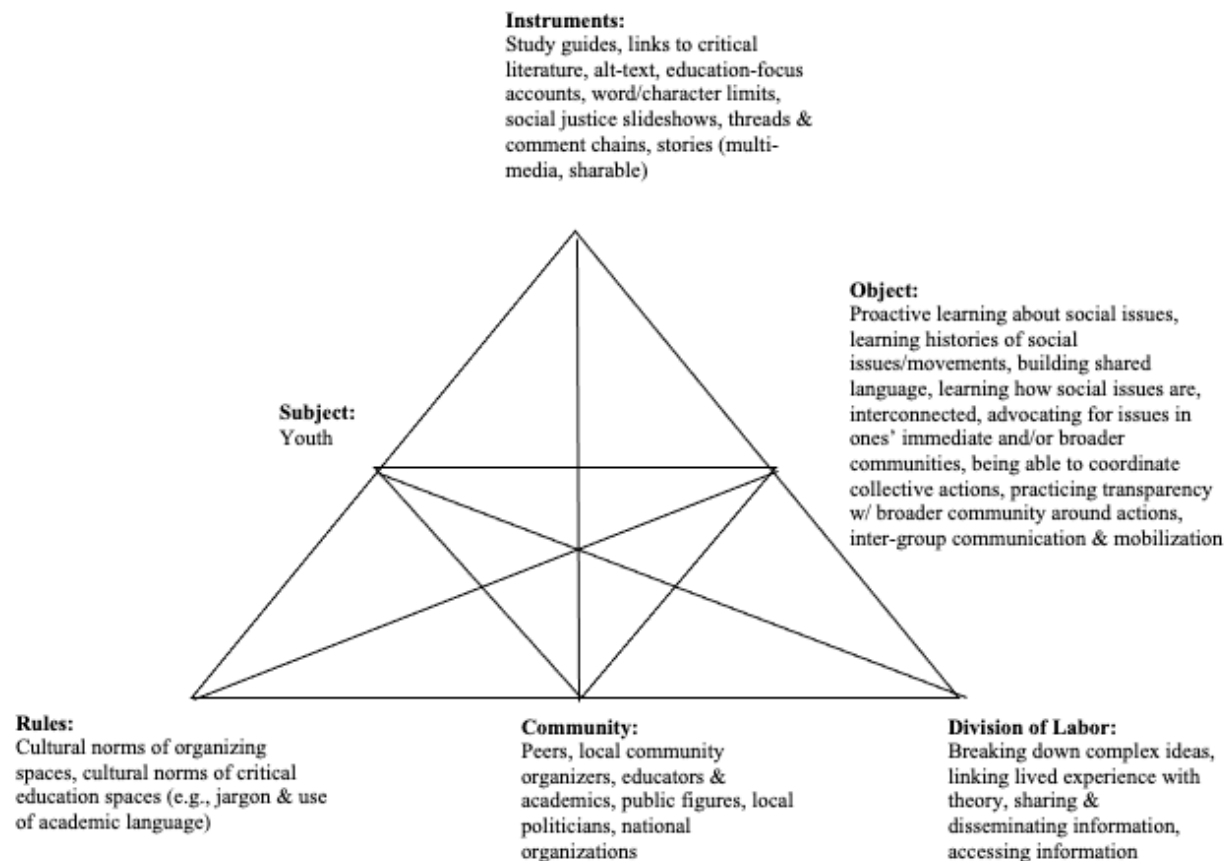
Activity System of Social Media and Youth Sociopolitical Development – Accessibility



The youth co-researchers emphasized a series of tools or instruments on social media that youth use to increase the accessibility of SPD. For example, youth talked about how they used

education-focused accounts and social justice slideshows (instruments) created by educators and academics (community) to break down complex ideas (division of labor) and also challenge some of the norms that act as barriers for youth to participate in dialogue, like the use of jargon or academic terms used in organizing spaces (rules). Youth researchers outline how this system of activity facilitates SPD (outcome) by helping youth be more proactive in learning about social issues, learning about the histories of social issues/movements, building shared language, learning about how social issues are interconnected, increasing the ability to participate in dialogue and learning critical perspectives to help them understand their lived experiences (object).

However, youth also noted that this activity system for increasing accessibility was in tension with a system of activity that increased barriers to SPD or where increased accessibility had adverse effects on youth SPD. They analyzed an activity system of gatekeeping, increased exposure to racist violence, and unhealthy boundary setting. Figure 7 summarizes instruments/tools, rules, community, and division of labor interactions that youth discussed in their results above.

Figure 7*Activity System of Social Media and Youth Sociopolitical Development – Gatekeeping & Unhealthy Boundary Setting*

These two activity systems operate simultaneously. For example, the YPAR collective noted that while tools like social justice slideshows and education-focused accounts (instruments) can help make complicated ideas more accessible, they can also be used by peers in online spaces (community) to reinforce high expectations of learned knowledge (rules) to gain access into political dialogue or organizing spaces (community). As a result, the youth co-researchers saw this negatively impacting their ability to communicate with others and navigate

conflict. Also, the social power youth would gain by demonstrating their learned knowledge would introduce challenges related to egocentrism.

Youth also talked about how social media makes organizing communities and spaces more accessible. They can use tools like Instagram stories or event-sharing accounts to seek out opportunities for taking critical action in their communities. They discussed how this helps them build strong relationships that encourage social/personal transformation, coordinate collective actions, and mobilize across groups. All of those were central to the YPAR collective's operationalization of youth SPD. At the same time, the young people talked about how the constant access to news and calls for mobilization can also lead to increased racial traumatization and struggles with setting healthy boundaries.

They talked about using social media to compare their commitment to social transformation with others, worrying if they are doing enough to respond to the injustices they are fighting against. At the same time, they also use social media to evaluate their peers' critical consciousness and commitment to critical action based on what they post or don't. This can lead to a culture of monitoring the members of their communities instead of mobilizing them. This negatively affects their personal and organizing relationships. It can also create enormous pressure on young people, leading to unsupported emotional stress and burnout, particularly for marginalized youth who are educating and organizing rooted in their lived experiences.

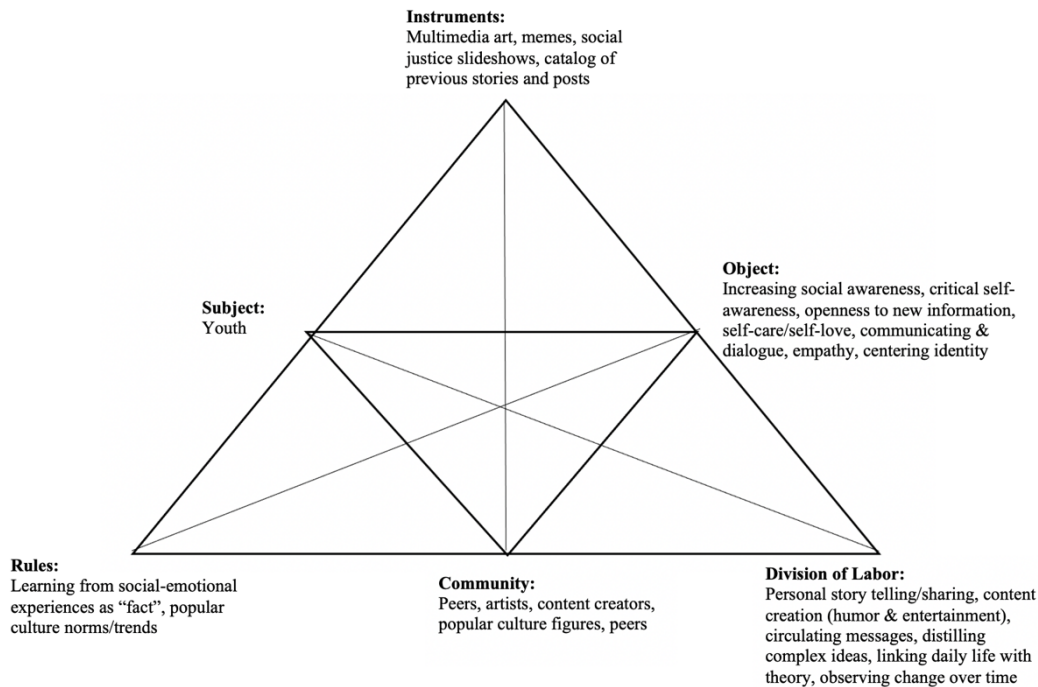
Youth transform themselves and the activity system itself by working through the tensions, conflicts, and contradictions (Engeström, 1987; Engeström & Sannino, 2010). The YPAR collective was able to identify some of the key elements at play. This provides insight into ways that youth, and other community members, can promote social media as a tool for

accessibility and mitigate the issues of gatekeeping, increased exposure to racist violence, and the difficulty in setting boundaries.

Critical Consciousness Development

Again, using the conceptual models of SPD laid out by the YPAR collective in Chapter 4 (see Table 2), we identified various ways that facilitate and limit youth SPD. Applying activity theory, we can see that the YPAR collective identified a series of actions between youth, social media instruments, community, rules, and division of labor. They are summarized in Figures 9, 10, and 11.

The youth co-researchers emphasized a series of tools or instruments on social media that youth use to deepen critical consciousness development, including the cognitive and social-emotional aspects (Figure 8). Youth researchers examined how artists, content creators (community), and themselves (subject) can use multimedia art (instrument) to share sociopolitical experiences (division of labor) in such a way that others can engage the social-emotional aspects of SPD and deepen their understanding of an issue (object). They also noted that this shapes/shifts the social rules or norms about what source of “facts” are important for learning and development (rules).

Figure 8*Activity System of Social Media and Youth Sociopolitical Development – Deepening Critical Consciousness*

For example, AJ shared a TikTok where music and visual art were used to share information about indigenous genocide and the ongoing effects of colonization. As the narrator, a professional artist, read a script about the history of an event and how it continues today, the music and visual elements helped the viewer connect on a sensory level. In chapter four, youth researchers described how they think this helps young people move beyond superficial or purely cognitive forms of social awareness and develop a stronger connection to the social justice struggle.

Another example was the creation, transformation, and dissemination (division of labor) of memes (instrument) by content creators (community) and youth themselves (subject). Youth researchers noted how memes use humor or recognizable elements in popular culture to distill

complex social phenomena and link daily life with theory (division of labor). Co-researcher TZ observed through looking at the performance analytics of their meme posts that youth may be more receptive to exploring new critical information or contradictions through memes (object).

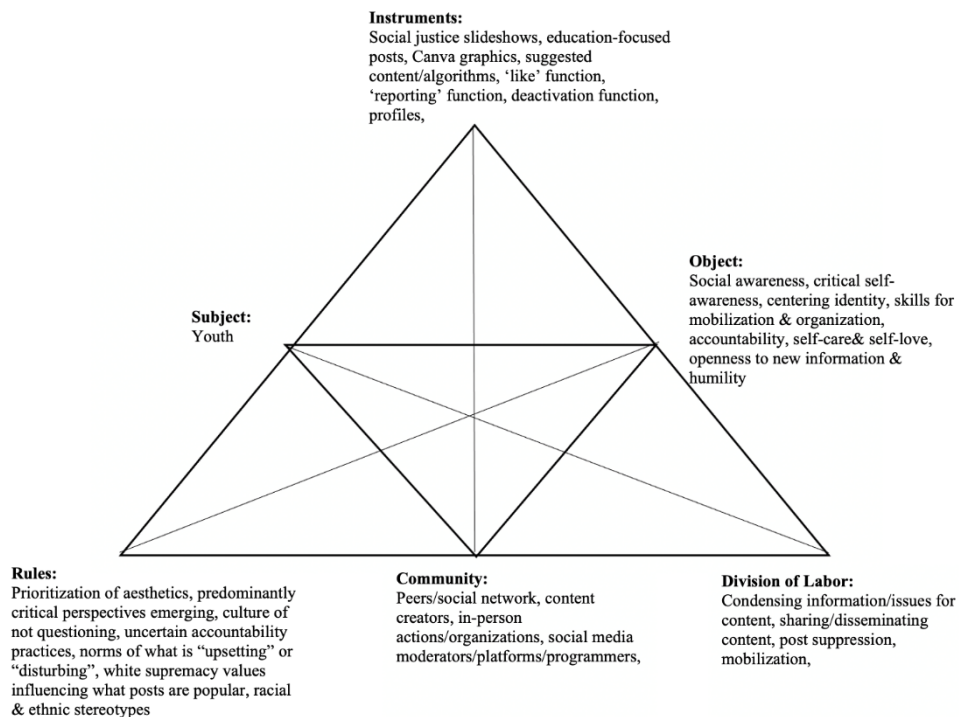
They also explored how social media allows them to explore their identities in a way where they can deepen their connection to themselves and identity-based communities. The youth noted that social media's networked and collective nature facilitates identity development where they explore their personal experience of the social world in the context of a community. This is aligned with some of the ideas explored in chapter four, where youth talked about the importance of learning to explore and center their identity without shifting into a culture of individualism.

While social media can help deepen young peoples' understanding and connection to social justice, the YPAR collective also noted that social media contributes to an oversimplification and reduction of issues that may negatively impact critical consciousness development. The key instruments, rules, community and division of labor are outlined in Figure 9.

The youth researchers highlighted how some of the instruments that support accessibility of SPD, like social justice slideshows or aesthetically-pleasing Canva graphics about social issues, can lead to the oversimplification of ideas and events. The social media platform necessitates concise messages (instrument), and they noted some ways that aesthetics can be prioritized over more comprehensive content (rules). Youth talked about how they use social media as one of their main sources of information, and also default to the aesthetic norms when sharing content (division of labor) with their network (community). They saw this negatively impacting youth capacity for critical analysis.

Figure 9

Activity System of Social Media and Youth Sociopolitical Development – Oversimplification, Reduction & Echo Chambers



Youth also examined how they rely heavily (division of labor) on suggested content, algorithms (instrument) or their immediate network (community) for information about sociopolitical ideas and events. All of the youth co-researchers noted that their feed is very polarized. They rarely interact with people that hold different views than themselves, except for when they come across extreme views or sensational conflicts. For the most part, youth relied on their home pages as a jumping-off point for their learning. Algorithm-suggested content leads to people with shared views, affirming what they already believe. This can have beneficial effects for SPD as it is important to have a community of people with shared values and commitments. However, youth noted that it can also be detrimental to SPD as it creates limits the diversity of marginalized

perspectives they engage with. They noted how from this, it is possible for dominant critical or marginalized perspectives to emerge, and some felt that there was a culture of not asking questions from fear or anxiety of doing harm (rules).

Two multiracial youth researchers also noted that social media profiles emphasize observable or curated images in such a way that they feel that certain aspects of their racial-ethnic identities are erased and that qualities of what it means to be part of a cultural community become superficial. They talked about how this adversely affects their racial-ethnic socialization in a way that is detrimental to the SPD constructs of critical self-awareness, self-love, and identity.

Implications

Youth transform themselves and the activity system by working through the tensions, conflicts, and contradictions (Engeström, 1987; Engeström & Sannino, 2010). Activity theory helps us identify the various agents (i.e., youth and communities), cultural practices (i.e., rules), instruments, and ways of working together (i.e., division of labor) that both facilitate and limit youth SPD. This can help researchers, educators, and practitioners identify opportunities for amplifying the power of social media as a tool for youth SPD and mitigate some of the ways social media is adversely affecting youth SPD. The implications for theory and research across the youth sociopolitical development, digital health, and civic tech are discussed below.

Implications for Theory & Research

First, the YPAR collective introduced a youth organizer-constructed conceptualization of youth sociopolitical development. This epistemological contribution supplements decades of educational, political, empowerment, and development theory in a meaningful way. The young co-researchers in this project largely agreed with the literature's definition of those two

constructs. This serves as an important validation of existing academic research. However, the collective placed added emphasis on social and emotional domains of SPD that are not additive factors but foundational to the developmental process. The collective's work helps us link Freire and other scholars' theory of praxis and "conscientization" (Freire, 1973) with the actions and activities they see those theories being enacted through. The work from Chapter 4 helps us operationalize the key elements that are often broadly defined in those theories.

Second, an increasing number of studies are emerging around problems of racial and social justice on social media. However, the bulk of studies have focused on oppressive content, and less attention has been paid to the experiences of those who are targeted or the impact of vicarious experiences (Bliuc et al., 2018; Criss et al., 2020). This study is rooted in the experiences and perspectives of marginalized youth, thus contributing an important epistemological perspective. In Chapters 5 and 6, the YPAR collective outlined two important insights that can speak to the ambivalent relationship between social media and youth sociopolitical development. They did so by integrating their working theory of youth SPD with their actions, activities, and interactions online. This helps bridge the theory-to-practice gap and identify possible leverage points for transforming the role that social media can play in youth SPD.

The epistemological, methodological, and analytical approaches used in this project allowed the YPAR collective to explore the research question in a way that centers on the marginalized perspectives of the youth researchers and clarifies the complex activity systems that shape the social media–youth SPD relationship. In doing so, this project increases the epistemological diversity of civic tech and SPD fields. Having activity systems theory supplement the experiential theories of youth, we were also able to gain more insight into young

people's inner worlds as they negotiate the many tensions, conflicts, and contradictions in social media's ambivalent relationship with youth SPD. This can catalyze identifying openings for intervention across youth activity systems so that the positive activities can be promoted and the adverse activities can be interrupted.

Implications for Practice

There are a variety of broader implications for youth SPD practice. Educators, community organizations, and other institutions play an important role in facilitating youth SPD (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2021). Throughout the data collection and analysis, the YPAR collective identified a series of potential opportunities for educators, policymakers, and social media programmers to better support youth SPD via social media.

Critical Digital Literacy Interventions. Critical literacy can contribute to youth SPD (Anyiwo et al., 2021; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Watts et al., 1999; Watts et al., 2003). Critical media literacy is a pedagogical approach that empowers young people to critique and challenge damaging, deficit-based, and controlling images in media (Anyiwo et al., 2021). It includes deconstructing and challenging dominant narratives in the media by using critical inquiry and analysis to link media to broader issues (Kellner & Share, 2005; Morrell, 2002). Youth are provided a context through which they can build their capacity for identifying damaging, deficit-based, and controlling messages. This reduces the extent to which they internalize oppressive media portrayals (Anyiwo et al., 2021; Goodwill, 2018).

Digital technology is continuously growing and has rapidly changed how young people engage with information. This poses unique considerations for youth literacy and has led to the study and practice of digital literacy. Digital literacy is the ability to understand and use the

information to solve problems in digital environments (Glister, 1997; Fu, 2013; Martin & Grudziecki, 2006).

School-based critical literacy, digital literacy, and digital activism are powerful interventions. Digital literacy pedagogy (in and outside of school) affects how we define, teach & engage in digital literacy. This includes how the 'critical' and 'digital' aspects of literacy are negotiated and how power plays out for youth in the process (Avila & Pandya, 2013). This work aligns with the YPAR collective's action recommendations, which discussed ways that schools and youth programs could harness the power of critical literacy and digital literacy to amplify some of the ways that social media facilitates youth SPD and mitigate some of the adverse effects. However, youth in the collective noted that current digital literacy interventions in local school districts felt piece-meal, and often failed to acknowledge issues of race, power and oppression adequately. The YPAR collective's recommendation was to explore school-based critical digital literacy intervention further, using a participatory action research approach.

Social Media Policy. The results of this project also raised questions about the role of social media policy. To address the issues of boundary-setting and increased exposure to racial violence, some members of the YPAR collective advocated for increased content moderation and implementing time limits on social media use for teens. However, these recommendations raise serious concerns about the governance of social media governance and social justice. Multiple youth co-researchers cited how there is already censorship and shadow-banning of critical thought, especially critical Black thought online. Increasing governance or oversight of youth social media use without also transforming how racial and social justice issues are incorporated into social media policy, design, and practice, could further marginalize youth perspective and participation in public life.

Youth in this study, and other studies (Criss et al., 2020), have suggested that access restriction and reducing social media use could be a viable solution to some of the issues related to increased exposure to racist violence and a lack of healthy boundary setting. However, monitoring youth online political participation could lead to further disenfranchisement from sociopolitical life. Further study about how to best support youth in setting and practicing these boundaries without increasing monitoring of youth online activity is needed.

With respect to issues of critical consciousness development, this study demonstrates the need for increased need for algorithmic transparency so that educators, programmers and policymakers can better address issues of homogenous, polarized information (Iandoli et al., 2021). In doing so, interventions can be developed to help youth learn how to youth be more critically reflective about how they are seeking out and consuming information.

Limitations

In addition to the limitations discussed in chapters four through six, this study has several overarching limitations. First, photovoice typically utilizes small or big group discussions to spark critical dialogue about the topic of interest (Wang, 1999). However, due to privacy concerns relating to the use of social media data with youth under 18, reports of “zoom fatigue” among youth co-researchers, and complicated summer schedules, all meetings were conducted 1-1 between the participant-researcher and the facilitator. However, the facilitator routinely summarized the issues, themes, and important topics raised by other participant-researchers and confidentially shared the information to build collective perspectives on their data. In future online photovoice projects, I will look into the technical and ethical considerations of creating a chat room where young people can directly dialogue with one another asynchronously.

There were additional concerns about privacy that may have affected the inquiry process. The interviews, dialogues, and data analysis meetings took place over Zoom, where all of the young participant-researchers lived with family, guardians, or roommates. Multiple times, family members appeared (and were noted visibly or audibly) in the room for some time. While some youth appeared to look comfortable sharing their thoughts regardless of their presence, at least two young people reported in the chatbox that there were certain things they would like to say but could not express out loud for fear of being overheard, even with their family members not being in the room. They were invited to write out their responses and drop them in the chatbox. However, it is possible that other young co-researchers felt the need to censor themselves with their family around.

Conducting a participatory multi-site case study as an individual facilitator of the process also limited the collaborative analysis. Case study approaches incorporate a rich and diverse set of data sources, allowing for more thick descriptions of the phenomena. While a considerable amount of time and attention was paid to organizing all of these sources from each case for participatory analysis, I was limited by the sheer volume of data. Doing this work with a team of experienced participatory research facilitators would increase the ability to go over the data with a fine-tooth comb and organize the basic information in ways youth can analyze it.

Additionally, not all of the experiences, insights, and theories offered by youth researchers could be triangulated with other data sources. However, the summary and interpretation of results as written in this dissertation were reviewed with each youth researcher individually. They verbally agreed that the interpretation of their words was accurate and that insights offered by other youth co-researchers were trustworthy.

Additionally, this study took place one year after the BLM uprisings of 2020 and over one year into the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the co-occurrence of these two significant events in the young researchers' recent past, the results are meant to be interpreted within this unique context. Youth researchers reflected on how they feel that the COVID-19 pandemic created more avenues for sociopolitical participation and that the internet played a larger role in all aspects of academic and social learning over the past year and a half.

The YPAR collective was diverse in youth age, race, ethnicity, ability, gender, etc. While this diversity can help illuminate some of the complexities and nuances between and across the young peoples' intersectional identities, it inevitably consolidates important insights within communities of shared sociocultural experience. The overarching project was set up such that future single-case and cross-case analyses could be completed. These analyses could address this limitation, but these analyses are not included in this dissertation. Additionally, this recruitment was focused on youth who are already interested in social justice and social media issues. While this was important to successfully navigate the dynamics of participatory research design analysis and action, this does introduce selection bias.

Finally, the YPAR collective identified and critically examined nine different but interrelated sets of important tensions, conflicts, and contradictions. Only two of those themes were explored in this dissertation. These two issues were among the most prevalent issues for youth co-researchers, but the other issues raised are deeply relevant and interconnected. These other themes add additional context and nuance to the results of this dissertation.

YPAR Collective Reflections on the Research Process

The YPAR collective members shared some reflections on successes and challenges of the research process. Table 3 outlines a summary of their proposed changes, and aspects of the

research process they thought were successful. There were some diverging opinions on logistics like meeting frequency, but many youth researchers noted that the reflection prompts associated with each image submission was very helpful. Youth also noted the importance of orientation and being asked open-ended questions by the facilitator in our meetings.

Table 3

Reflections on Research Process

Researcher	Proposed Changes	Keep the Same
JU	Have more frequent meetings (weekly) to analyze the photos/images	Like the reflection questions on the RedCap submission form, helped her develop skills for learning how to think about social media as she was engaging with it. The orientation helped her feel prepared for the project.
PK	Have more than 8 weeks to collect social media posts. Wants in-person group dialogue.	Likes being able to have their posts and analysis confidential and not being identified to all of the other co-researchers. Feels more confident sharing his thoughts freely.
KS	Be intentional about collecting examples from across all the different social media platforms they use (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, etc.). Also would like to focus on one social justice issue and collect variety of posts about that social issue.	Submission process was really straightforward and helped them learn how to think about the posts.
AK	Would like more support in wading through the huge amounts of possible “data” that exists on social media, especially at the beginning of the project.	Liked being asked open-ended questions in the meeting to get him thinking about his motivations or ways of engaging on social media. Helped him think about his own social media practice differently and enjoyed reflecting on that.
TF	Focus on one theme of types of posts to collect (i.e., each youth co-researcher looking for posts that do	Liked the written reflection questions that they would submit with each photo/image on RedCap. Made them think about the

“x” or do “y”) and then bring that data together.

production, intention and impact of social media content in different ways. Also liked how collecting and analyzing posts made them slow-down (i.e., can't just scroll through quickly) when engaging with social media.

Researcher	Proposed Changes	Keep the Same
TZ	Wanted more writing prompts for analysis and reflection in between meetings.	Liked having reminders and check-ins in-between meetings during data collection. Liked having 8 weeks to collect posts, and liked having meetings spread out.
MP	Wants to be able to have all her social media activity tracked for the project so they don't have to pick out pieces. Would like to reflect on things that they may be less aware/conscious of.	Having the meeting monthly made the project manageable and not too time consuming. Liked that the project included researchers who had various experience with organizing and critical action.
AJ	Nothing.	Liked the reflection prompts on the RedCap submission forms.
JB	Would like to engage with other young people outside of the YPAR collective, get their ideas of what should be collected/analyzed and their thoughts on what he collected.	Liked having a handful of long meetings instead of more frequent, shorter meetings. Helped him get into the flow of conversation and thinking.

Note. Researchers KM and ZB did not share final reflections on the research process

Future Directions for Research

The next step of this project is to complete manuscripts for the remaining seven findings to our research questions. This includes tensions, conflicts and contradictions of social media and youth SPD within: (1) identity development, (2) transparency & visibility, (3) conflict, (4) emotional & mental health, (5) movements & organizing, (6) empowerment and (7) relationships. Additionally, it is important to dive deeper into how the COVID-19 pandemic and the BLM movement of 2020 and 2021 impacted the relationship between social media and youth

SPD. The youth researchers in this study collected and analyzed data on this, and I will work on disseminating this information in the years to come.

The YPAR collective collected and analyzed a rich breadth and depth of visual, written and spoken word data. Other future analyses can include single cases analyses to dive deeper into some of the complexities and nuances of a young researchers' activity system, cross-case analyses based on a variety of comparisons, such as older vs, younger youth, more experienced vs. less experienced organizers, youth of different racial and ethnic identities, youth of different gender identities and more.

Doing further YPAR around the development and testing of critical digital literacy interventions is another priority for myself and some members of the YPAR collective. By analyzing the activity systems theory to highlight the key tensions, conflicts, and contradictions, we have a strong foundation for developing critical digital literacy interventions. From the different elements and actions explored, we can identify points of leverage or opportunity.

Final Reflections from the YPAR Collective

The inquiry process had an impact on the YPAR collective members individually and our insights are being used to strengthen local social movements.

YPAR Collective Transformation

As a facilitator, I was affected professionally and personally throughout the inquiry process. Professionally, this project pushed me to better understand the ways that technology and media intersect with issues of youth social, emotional, and political development. Most notably it helped me understand the ways that technology is deeply integrated into all aspects of youth experience and environment. The insights gained from this project will affect the way I approach youth development scholarship across contexts. Personally, and politically, I was impacted

through dialogue with youth researchers. There were varying perspectives on issues like cancel culture, the role of identity in organizing, theories about how social media may best be used as a tool for organizing (and its' limitations), and more. The discussions surrounding these ideas have shaped my ideas and actions in my personal and political actions, separate from my scholarship.

The members of the YPAR collective reflected that the inquiry process transformed how they use social media and their sociopolitical development. With respect to social media use, the young researchers' reflections are outlined in Table 4. They reflected that the YPAR project increased their active engagement with social media content for many young people. This included doing more proactive research when creating content, and also critically examining contextual information when consuming content. Multiple youth researchers affirmed their beliefs that social media is a good tool for building ones' political voice and getting important messages into public debate. One youth researcher uses social media less as a result of this project, citing that they are increasingly away of the unintended adverse effects of social media on SPD.

Table 4*Social Media Use Changes*

Researcher	How Process Changed Social Media Use
JU	Less “mindless scrolling” and more “active” exploration of content on social media. Enjoys using social media for news events more.
MO	Better able to connect with some topics that have come up in school around social media, health and current events. More “connecting” ideas.
PK	Paying more attention to what he does on social media. Sees it more as a tool for social justice than he did before.
KS	Developed a habit of paying more attention to the different aspects of a post (the post itself, source, comments, etc.)
AK	Using it more to get his voice out there and taking more time to supportively engage with others who are disseminating important messages.
TF	Thinking more critically about the message the creator of posts wants them to receive. This helps think more critically about content (even content they agree with) and not take everything at face value.
TZ	Thinking more about what motivates people to post what they do, what audience they are trying to reach, and thinking about how each posts affects sociopolitical development.
MP	Feeling more connected to other youth organizers via social media, even if she doesn’t know them personally.
AJ	Researches everything she reposts now, thinking more about the impact of her posts of others’ sociopolitical development.
JB	Made him use social media less. Feeling more aware of the unintended consequences of social media on sociopolitical development (his own and others). Thinks it is most effective for education, but uses it less for other purposes.

Note. Researchers KM and ZB did not share final reflections on the research process

With respect to how the YPAR process affected their sociopolitical development, the reflections of youth researchers are summarized in Table 5. Researchers reported an increase in their proactive engagement with seeking out and analyzing information about social justice, power and oppression. Some researchers saw their activism and organizing impacted by the inquiry process as well. This included how they engage with others, better connecting their work with broader community collectives and being more strategic in how they use social media for critical action.

Table 5

Sociopolitical Development Changes

Researcher	How Process Changed Sociopolitical Development
JU	More actively seeking out critical perspectives and information about social justice. More proactive about seeking out local events and actions.
MO	Feels like her approach to critical action is the same. Has deepened critical consciousness in some ways.
PK	Doesn't feel like his sociopolitical thinking has changed, but is better able to see how he can use social media to support critical action, especially for mobilization and gathering resources.
KS	More conscious of how sociopolitical information is filtered, sensationalized and often oversimplified. Shares more information about local actions.
AK	Feels more confident and comfortable talking about issues of social justice publicly (both in-person spaces like classroom discussions and online).
TF	When engaging in dialogue about social justice, is more cognizant of social media's effect on how we build our perspectives. As a result, they reflect more on how they formed their position and share that with others. Also made them want to get more information about critical ideas, histories and information from more diverse sources after realizing how much they depended on social media alone.
TZ	Thinking more about local action and community-building than national/global action. Also seeking out more spaces where they can build alternatives to the oppressive systems/practices they have been organizing against and has been

spending less energy doing large media-based actions. Also increased scrutiny for performative actions.

Researcher	How Process Changed Sociopolitical Development
MP	Seeing her mutual aid work be so connected to the work other youth organizers are doing feels validating and encouraging. Learned a lot by reflecting on the ways she organizes and why she does what she does. Also increased scrutiny for performative actions.
AJ	New reflections and perspectives about performative actions and “cancel culture,” particularly thinking about how social media impacts the type and quality of relationships she has with other organizers
JB	Critically reflecting on how he seeks validation of others from “posting activism” and the commercialization of social movements online. Is renegotiating how he uses social media for his organizing.

Note. Researchers KM and ZB did not share final reflections on the research process

As outlined above, the YPAR project shaped YPAR collective members’ critical consciousness and ways of engaging in issues of social justice. The collective also identified actions that can be taken in light of what we learned. Multiple youth discussed the need for critical digital literacy in schools. This is discussed in the implications section above. They also identified the need for more training on how to use social media intentionally and strategically in their community organizing. About half of the collective members are part of an organization, and two stated that they plan to translate what they are learning into an organizer training for young people. The facilitator is also translating some of these insights into education graphics and short guides to disseminate to local community organizations.

Conclusion

Social media has a profound effect on youth sociopolitical development, but the relationship is complicated. This multisite case study uses the participatory action research methodology of photovoice to gain a deeper insight into the ways that social media facilitates

and limits youth sociopolitical development. In doing so, we were able to identify a series of social, technical, and cultural elements that contribute to the complex web of interaction.

Researchers, practitioners and young people themselves can use these insights to amplify the possibilities of social media and mitigate some of the adverse effects on youth SPD.

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Asian And LGBTQ+. [@asianandlgbtq]. (n.d.) [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Asian & Pacific Islander 🏳️‍🌈 LGBTQ+ research, histories, cultures, religions, and more! Educate 🧠 | Support 🗳️ | Inspire 🗣️ | Empower 🏳️‍🌈🌟
<https://www.instagram.com/asianandlgbtq/?hl=en>

Asian And LGBTQ+. [@asianandlgbtq]. (2021, July 31). 🏳️‍🌈 It is important that we understand the etymology of words that we use to empower ourselves. On this project we chose to focus on "Queer." ⚡ "Queer Theory" is a project that is upcoming so stay tuned!! https://www.instagram.com/p/CR_3q2jLOZT/

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Participant-Researcher Characteristics

Participant ID	Identities											Social Media Use					Social Justice Commitments	Community Engagement	
	Age	First Language	Family's Class	Ability/Disability	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Race	Ethnicity	National Origin	Religion or Spirituality	Identities They Think About the Most	Identities They Think About the Least	Average hrs/day on Social Media	Apps they Use the Most	Apps they Use the Least	How Often They Create Content	How much of that content is sociopolitical or related to social justice?	Issues that are most important to them	Membership in Social Organizations
2 -JU	14	English, Cantonese	Middle Class	Able Bodied	Cisgender Woman	Bisexual	Asian	Malaysian	United States	Christian	Age, Gender, Race	Class, Religion/Spirituality, Ethnicity	1-3	Instagram, Reddit, YouTube	Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr	1-3 times per week	50%	Climate Change, racial Injustice, Gun Violence	3 Organizations
16 -ZB	14	English	Middle Class	Able-bodied	Cisgender Woman	-	Black	African	United States	Christian	Class, Race, Ethnicity	Ability	3-4	Instagram, TikTok, Other	Facebook, Reddit, YouTube	1-3 times per week	75%	Black Lives Matter, Stop Asian Hate, Free Palestine, Stop Amhara/Tigray Genocide, etc.	No
3 - KM	15	Vietnamese	Working Class	Able Bodied	Cisgender woman	Heterosexual	Asian	Vietnamese	United States	Buddhist	Age, Class, Gender, Race, National Origin, Religion/Spirituality, Ethnicity	First Language, Ability, Biological Sex, Sexual Orientation	5	Instagram, YouTube	Reddit	Less than 1 time per week	100%	Abolitionism, anti-racism, anti-capitalism, housing justice, human trafficking prevention, and climate justice	8 Organizations
4 - MO	15	English	Middle/Working Class	Anxiety, Severe Depression & Body Dysmoprhia	Cisgender Woman	Fluid	Biracial, Afro-Latina, white	Puerto Rican, Italian	United States	None	Age, Biological Sex, Gender, Race, Sexual Orientation, Religion/Spirituality, Ethnicity	First Language, Class, National Origin	7	TikTok, YouTube	Facebook, Reddit, Tumblr	I never create content for social media	0%	Global warming, feminism, equity movement	1 Organization
6 - PK	15	English	Upper Middle Class	Living with Mental Illness	Trans masc	MLM	Multiracial	Black, white, Indian	United States	None	Class, Gender, Race, Sexual	Age, First Language, National Origin,	2	Twitter, Instagram	Facebook, Reddit	I create conte	50%	Black liberation and trans issues	2 Organizations

											Orientation, Ethnicity	Religion/Spirituality		am, TikTok	Tumblr	nt multiple times per day (most days)			
8 - KS	16	English	Working Class	Able Bodied	Gender Fluid	Bisexual	white	Irish, Scandinavian	United States	None	Age, Class, Biological Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Religion/Spirituality	First Language, national Origin, Ethnicity	3-4	Instagram, TikTok	Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Tumblr	1-3 times per week	75%	Feminism, Racism and Homophobia	1 Organization
9 - AK	16	Somali	Working Class	Able Bodied	Cisgender Man	Straight	Black	African American	Kenya	Muslim	First Language, Ability, Gender, Race, Sexual Orientation, Religion/Spirituality, Ethnicity	Age, National Origin	6	Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube	Instagram	4-7 times per week	50%	Civil rights, climate change and poverty and homelessness	2 Organizations
10 - TF	17	English	Middle Class	Living w/ a Disability	Non-binary	Asexual	white	Irish	United States	Not Religious	Age, Ability, Gender, Sexuality, Religion/Spirituality	First Language, Class, Race, National Origin, Ethnicity	4	Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube	Facebook, Reddit, Tumblr	1-3 times per week	75%	climate justice, income equality, reproductive justice/menstrual equity	5 Organizations
11 - TZ	17	English	Middle Class	Able-bodied	Non-binary	Lesbian	white	white	United States	Agnostic	Age, Biological Sex, Gender, Race, Sexual Orientation	Language, Ability, Religion/Spirituality	5	Instagram, TikTok	Facebook, Reddit	I create content multiple times per day (most days)	75%	Environmental justice, anti colonialism, anti capitalism, racial justice as a whole and lgbtq rights.	6 Organizations
12 -MP	18	English	Working Class	Able-bodied	Cisgender Woman	Heterosexual	Asian	Vietnamese	United States	Buddhist	Class, Gender, Race, Ethnicity	Age, First Language, Ability, Biological Sex, National Origin, Sexuality, Religion/Spirituality	9	Instagram	Reddit, YouTube, Tumblr	I never create content for social media	0%	Racism, poverty, housing insecurity, policing	2 Organizations

13 - AJ	19	Spanish	Poor	Able Bodied	Cisgender Woman	Heterosexual	white Latine	Mexican	United States	Atheist	Age, First Language, Class, Gender, Race, Ethnicity	Ability, Biological Sex, Race, National Origin, Sexual Orientation, Religion/Spirituality	8	Instagram, TikTok, YouTube	Facebook, Reddit, Tumblr	1-3 times per week	100%	Abolition, Education, Immigration, Climate, Youth Involvement, Access to Information/Representation	1 Organization
15 - JB	19	English	Upper Class	Able-bodied	Cis Man	Gay	Asian, white	Korean, white	United States	Atheist	Age, Class, Race, Sexual Orientation	Ability, National Origin, Religion/Spirituality	3	Instagram, TikTok, YouTube	Twitter, Tumblr	I create content multiple times per day (most days)	75%	Housing justice & anti-gentrification.	4 Organizations

Appendix B: Interview 1 Protocol**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #1****PRIMARY GOAL**

Explore the youth-community-object triangle in activity system model (activity theory)

- Learning about the young people's identities and perspective of self, their social values and political attitudes
- Learn about parts of their offline ecosystem that influences their sociopolitical development
- Learn about young people's social media construction of sociopolitical self

TIME: 60 - 90 minutes

DATES: 6/28 - 7/2

GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the relationship between social media activity and youth sociopolitical identity development (personal, relational and collective/social)?
 1. In particular, what is the relationship between social media activity and youth critical reflection (developing critical awareness, analysis, ideology)?

BEFORE FIRST INTERVIEW

Before 1st interview have each youth complete via redcap:

- Identity wheel activity
- Social media usage survey

PREAMBLE

Thank you for participating in this project! Before we start, I want to go over a few logistics. First and foremost, your participation is completely voluntary. That means you can stop at any time and skip any questions you would like to skip. Also, everything you say is confidential. That means what you say today and will not be linked to your name in any way. So, feel free to be honest in your responses. However, if I learn that you intend to harm yourself or others, I must report that to the authorities. Do you have any questions about what I just said?

These interviews are going to be recorded. Is that okay with you?

IDENTITY & COMMUNITY**Personal Identity [30 minutes]**

1. So tell me a little about yourself! *[self-ascription]*
[Possible Probes]
 - a. How would you describe yourself?
 - b. How do you think those who know you best would describe you?
 - c. What are some aspects of who you are that are really important to you?
 - d. What are some aspects of who you are that you are still exploring or are unsure about?

2. How would you describe your social media image? Especially your social or political self? *[self-ascription]*

[Possible Probes]

- a. If someone who didn't know you had to describe your social/political values and ideas based off your social media, what do you think they would say? *[self-ascription] [construction of self] [perception of others]*
 - b. How do you create this image online? *[self-ascription] [construction of self]*
 - c. What is something that you want others to know about you/your politics/commitment to social justice? *[self-ascription] [construction of self]*
 - i. Why is that important to you?
 - ii. How do you build that into your social media activity?
 - d. What are some things that you don't share with people on social media? Why? *[self-ascription] [construction of self]*
 - i. Anything you are hesitant to share on social media? Why are you hesitant?
 - ii. Has there ever been posts or content that you have deleted? Or posts/content you would not want others to bring back up? What is it and why do you want it hidden?
3. How did you come to be interested in social justice? *[critical awareness][motivation]*
[Possible Probes]
- a. What's your earliest memory of being interested in social justice?
 - b. What communities/spaces have supported you in learning more about social justice, or getting involved in social justice work?
4. What role has social media played in your relationship with social justice? *[critical awareness][motivation]*
- a. What's your earliest memory of social justice or political content on social media?
5. What are some social issues or injustices that are important to you?
[Possible Probes]
- a. What do you think causes those issues/injustices? *[critical analysis]*
 - b. Why are those issues important to you? *[motivation]*
 - c. What is your personal relationship to that issue? *[motivation]*
 - d. How did those issues come to be important to you?
 - i. What did/do you do to learn about different issues? *[critical awareness][critical analysis]*
 - ii. Where do you look for information about those issues? *[critical awareness][critical analysis]*
 - iii. How do you assess whether the information is trustworthy or not? *[critical awareness][critical analysis]*
 - iv. How have your values and beliefs about insert their response changed over time?
 - v. Who in your life shares those beliefs/values on this issue?
[relational/community]
 1. How do you know they share your beliefs/values?
 2. How do you engage with one another around this issue?
 - vi. Who in your life does not share those beliefs/values on this issue?*[relational/community]*

1. How do you know they share your beliefs/values?
2. How do you engage with one another around this issue?
6. What are some issues/social problems that you are still exploring (meaning you are not sure where you stand)?
 - a. How do you explore those issues?
 - b. Where do you look for information about those issues? *[critical awareness][critical analysis]*
 - c. How do you assess whether the information is trustworthy or not? *[critical awareness][critical analysis]*
 - d. How have your values and beliefs about [insert their response] changed over time?

Relational Identity [30 minutes]

7. How would you describe your communities on social media? *[construction of community][critical dialogue]*
[Possible Probes]
 - a. Is it different across platforms?
 - b. What kinds of things do you look for in social media to assess other peoples' values, ideas or commitment to social justice?
 - c. Do you engage with people similar to you? In what way are they similar? How do you engage with them or their content?
 - d. Do you engage with people who are Different than you? In what way are they different? How do you engage with them or their content?
8. How do you build community on social media? *[critical dialogue][construction of community]*
[Possible Probes]
 - a. How do you connect with others?
 - b. What kind of support do you find online? How does that support compare/contrast to support you get in your offline communities? *[emotional support]*
 - c. How do you maintain relationships with people and organizations?
 - d. How does your online community overlap with your offline communities?
 - e. How is your online community unique from your offline communities?
9. Who are some people, organizations or public figures on social media that have influenced the way you think or feel about a social issue? Tell me more about that.
10. Tell me about your experience with political or social justice conflicts online. *[critical dialogue][construction of community]*
[Possible Probes]
 - a. Have you ever blocked anyone? Can you give an example of what that was like?
 - i. What did you see that upset you?
 - ii. What did you do before blocking?
 - iii. Was there any follow-up or fallout after blocking them?
 - b. Has anyone ever blocked you? If so, what was that like?
11. Do you ever find yourself comparing yourself to others online? How? In what ways? What kinds of things do you compare/contrast?

Social Identity [30 minutes]

12. How has social media impacted the way you think about/explore your identities?
13. How have your social identities (things like race, gender, religion, sexuality, etc) impacted your ideas or actions around social justice?
14. In what ways does social media help you feel positive about or connected with your social identities (e.g., race, gender, class, sexuality, etc)?
[Possible Probes]
 - a. Can you think of a time when you felt really positive and connected with a social identity of yours through social media?
15. Can you tell me about a time when your identity was challenged on social media?
[Possible Probes]
 - a. [Possible re-phrase] Can you think of a time when you felt negative or difficult emotions relating to identity on social media?
 - b. What was that like for you?
 - c. What did you feel?
 - d. What did you do?
16. When you create content, what is it like for you to communicate with so many people who have different identities, values and ideas online?
[Possible Probes]
 - a. What audience do you think about the most? Why?
 - b. What audience do you think about the least? Why?
 - c. How does your content change when you are engaging with different audiences/communities?
 - d. How do you know that something you post is well-received?
 - e. What does that feel like?
 - f. How does that impact future social media activity?
 - g. How do you know that something was not well received?
 - i. What does that feel like?
 - ii. How does that impact future social media activity?
17. What is it like to witness or experience discrimination (or other actions of racism, heteronormativity, sexism, homophobia, etc) on social media?
[Possible Probes]
 - a. How does this experience compare/contrast from witnessing/experiencing discrimination offline?
 - b. When do you take action? Can you think of an example?
 - c. When do you decide not to take action? Can you think of an example?

END OF INTERVIEW

- **Next Steps**
 - Photovoice starts next week!
 - Any questions come up?
 - Remind about next interview date

Appendix C: Interview 2 Protocol**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #2****Primary Goals:**

- Learn about how youth define sociopolitical or social justice activity/action
- Learn about their experience/histories with organizing or taking social justice action
- Views on how social media helps/hurts organizing
- Learn about the impact of COVID-19 on intersection of social media and youth SPD

Guiding RQs:

1. In what ways has the COVID-19 pandemic affected sociopolitical development? And specifically, how has it affected social media's role?
2. What role does social media play in youth sociopolitical action and activism?

PREAMBLE

Thank you for participating in this project! Before we start, I want to go over a few logistics. First and foremost, your participation is completely voluntary. That means you can stop at any time and skip any questions you would like to skip. Also, everything you say is confidential. That means what you say today and will not be linked to your name in any way. So, feel free to be honest in your responses. However, if I learn that you intend to harm yourself or others, I must report that to the authorities. Do you have any questions about what I just said?

These interviews are going to be recorded. Is that okay with you?

QUESTIONS**SPD GENERAL**

1. This project is about trying to support young people in learning about social justice and learning the skills necessary to be change agents in their communities. We are calling this 'sociopolitical development'. What does positive sociopolitical development look like to you? [*Photovoice*]
 - a. What do you think "good" sociopolitical development looks like?
 - b. What kinds of skills do you think young people need to be developing? [*skills*] [*capacity*]
 - i. How do you develop these skills?
 1. [if not already mentioned] Do you think social media can play a role in developing any of those things?
 - ii. What are some organizing skills that you think you are most strong in?
 - iii. What are some organizing skills that you want to develop or improve?
2. How do you think sociopolitical development happens? [*process*]
3. What does social justice mean to you? [*political vision*]
 - a. How do you think your vision of social justice be achieved?
4. What kind of changes need to be made... and who needs to make those changes?
5. What does political participation look like to you?
6. What does being involved in social justice work look like to you?

7. What do you think is your personal role/responsibility is in working towards social justice? *[division of labor]*
[Possible Prompts]
 - a. How do you do those things? What does it look like?
 - b. What is NOT your responsibility?
8. What do you think is the responsibility of others? *[division of labor]*
[Possible Prompts]
 - a. What is the responsibility of other young people?
 - b. What is the responsibility of adults?
 - c. Other specific people/entities?
 - d. What is the responsibility of those in your communities?
 - e. What is the responsibility of those outside of your communities?
 - f. Do you think some people have more or less responsibility?

Experience with Organizing

9. What are some ways you have been working for social justice in your communities?
 - a. What kind of actions have you participated in?
 - b. What kind of actions have you never participated in? Why?
 - c. Has COVID impacted this in the past year and a half?
 - d. Have the BLM movements of the past year impacted this?
 - e. What types of activism/social justice work do you do in/with organizations?
 - i. Why not?
 - f. What would make it easier to get involved?
 - g. What types of activism/social justice work do you do individually?
 - h. Have you ever participated in mass actions (like attended protests that weren't necessarily tied to a specific group?)
 - i. If no - Why not? If yes - what was that like?
10. **How would you compare/contrast your online and offline organizing?
 - a. Is there a difference between activism and online activism? Why or why not?
11. What are some limits/barriers to you taking action on issues you care about?
[Possible Prompts]
 - a. Can you think of a time when you felt powerless against a social justice issue? Tell me about that. *[empowerment]*
 - b. Are there any political actions you would like to take, but can't?
12. In what contexts do you feel like you have real/direct power to make a change?
[Possible Prompts]
 - a. Why do you feel like you have power in those situations?
 - b. What are some areas where you do not feel like you can access power?
 - c. What do you do to make your voice heard by those in power that you want to influence? *[participation]*
 - d. Do you feel like your voice is heard? By who?
 - e. **How do you feel like social media impacts your feelings of empowerment?
[empowerment]
 - f. Can you think of a time when you felt powerful in the face of a social justice issue? Tell me about that. *[empowerment]*

13. Do you think that social media makes you more politically powerful? Why or why not?
14. What are some tools, technologies or resources that facilitate you taking action on issues you care about?
 - a. What tools or technology do you need to organize?

SOCIAL MEDIA

15. How important is social media for your organizing or community engagement?
 - a. How would your organizing be different if you didn't use social media?
16. What are some ways that you think social media is problematic for social justice or social change? Examples?
17. What are some ways that you think social media is helpful for social justice or social change? Examples?
18. Has the way you used social media in your organizing changed over time? What do you think has caused those changes?
19. What are some unspoken rules of social media activism/organizing?

COVID/BLM-SPECIFIC

20. How has COVID affected your social media use generally?
 - a. How does your social media use compare with your social media use before COVID?
21. How has COVID affected your relationships?
 - a. How has COVID affected the way you engage in dialogue with others about social issues?
22. Has COVID impacted your social or political views? If so, how?
23. What about the Black Lives Matter Movements of the past year? How have those impacted your views or actions?
 - a. How involved were you? What was that like?
 - b. How did your involvement in activism in the past year compare/contrast with activism before COVID & the pandemic?
 - c. What role did social media play in the BLM movement of the past year?

Appendix D: Interview 3 Protocol**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #3****Primary Goal:**

- Begin analysis of photovoice posts
- Reflect on the photovoice process

Guiding RQs:

1. In what ways can social media facilitate critical consciousness, empowerment, capacity-building, and youth organizing,
2. In what ways can social media limit those things?

Protocol**BEFORE THE SESSION:**

- Prep all posts collected and summary of what they said on the form.
- Complete in-vivo coding of basic themes

PREAMBLE

Thank you for participating in this project! Before we start, I want to go over a few logistics. First and foremost, your participation is completely voluntary. That means you can stop at any time and skip any questions you would like to skip. Also, everything you say is confidential. That means what you say today and will not be linked to your name in any way. So, feel free to be honest in your responses. However, if I learn that you intend to harm yourself or others, I must report that to the authorities. Do you have any questions about what I just said?

These interviews are going to be recorded. Is that okay with you?

The Process

1. What was it like to screen capture and submit the posts?
 1. How did you create or capture this image (explore limitations of screenshotting, downloading and sharing for study purposes)
 2. Were there any challenges?
 3. Were there any posts you didn't submit because the process made it too difficult?
2. Thinking back to our orientation, what ideas or pieces of information shaped the way you collected your social media posts?
3. How does the social media platform impact what/how you collect the posts?

REVIEW RESULTS OF SPD DEFINITION

1. What do you think of this definition you all created?
 1. Anything you think is wrong or off?
 2. Anything you would add?
 3. Anything you think is really important to emphasize?
 1. Why?

The Posts

We will first review the series of posts that you submitted. I have included a summary of what you said on the associated form. Posts from this past week are not yet included. You can keep those in mind too as we talk. We will do some more analysis in a month too once I have had time to bring it all together. We will go through each post and discuss at the end.

Questions

1. What do you notice about the composition of the posts/screenshots?
 - a. What do some of your posts have in common?
 - b. What are some unique things about the posts that you collected?
 - c. What are some visual elements that you think are most important or interesting?
 - i. What are some visual elements that you think contribute to positive critical consciousness/thinking?
 - ii. What are some visual elements that you think contribute to action taking?
2. What do you notice about which types of posts you chose to highlight?
3. What is your relationship to some of the issues you raised?
 - a. What is your relationship to the ideas or content you see here?
 - b. Which posts do you feel most connected to? Or posts that feel most personal for you?
4. What are some factors, events or situations that influenced what posts you collected?

Present What Came Up for Other People

1. What are your first impressions of those results?
 - a. Anything stand out?
 - b. Anything surprise you?
 - c. Anything you want to make sure we dig into more for the next meeting (our last one)?

Appendix E: Interview 4 Protocol**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #3****PRIMARY GOAL:**

- Learn about how the overall research process has affected youth & their SPD
- Gather Ideas/Plan for Action
- Complete Analysis

GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. How have participant-researchers been impacted by the process/project itself?
2. Based on what we have learned, what forms of action do we need to take next?

PREAMBLE

Thank you for participating in this project! Before we start, I want to go over a few logistics. First and foremost, your participation is completely voluntary. That means you can stop at any time and skip any questions you would like to skip. Also, everything you say is confidential. That means what you say today and will not be linked to your name in any way. So, feel free to be honest in your responses. However, if I learn that you intend to harm yourself or others, I must report that to the authorities. Do you have any questions about what I just said?

These interviews are going to be recorded. Is that okay with you?

Questions**Reflection on Project**

1. How has this project affected the way you use social media?
2. How has this project affected your social justice work?
3. Were there particular parts of the project that had the biggest effect on these things?
4. How has this project affected the way you think about social media's role in sociopolitical development for young people?
5. If I were to do this project again....What would you do differently? What should we keep the same?

Analyzing Specific Posts

1. What do you see here?
2. What is really happening in this post?
3. How does this post relate to critical consciousness or organizing?
4. Why do you think this post is so impactful (positively or negatively)?
5. What is something about this post that you would want to use in your own organizing?
Or, What can be done about the negative impacts of this post on young people?

Analyzing Your Data

1. What do you think of this summary?
 1. Are there things that don't feel right to you?

2. Things you would add or want to emphasize?

Translating Into Action

2. What do you think can be done to address the contradiction of (see researchers' ppt)
3. What do you think causes or contributes to this tension/contradiction?
4. What are some things you can do to navigate this?
5. What are some ideas that you have about we can better use social media for:
 - a. Learning about Social Justice
 - b. Organizing
 - c. Communication/ Critical Dialogue
 - d. Building Community
6. What roles can schools play in all this? How about families? Youth programs? Who else?
7. What are some actions that you think you will take now that you have the knowledge you do?

CLOSING OUT

1. How do you want to be paid?
 1. Confirming details
2. Are you interested in being a co-author on a paper in a few months?
3. Any other questions or requests from me?

Appendix F: Photovoice Written Reflection Template
Confidential

Form 1

Record ID

Participant ID

Social Media Post [Upload Here]

Did you create or modify this post?

- No. This post was completely created by someone else.
- Yes. I completely created this post.
- Yes. This post was shared by someone else, and I edited, modified or added to it.
- Other

How would you describe or explain this post to someone?

Why did you choose to submit this post?

Critical consciousness includes things like: critical thinking, empowerment, awareness of social issues, social justice education.

What kind of impact does this post has on critical consciousness?

This post hurts critical consciousness. This post helps critical consciousness.

(Place a mark on the scale above)

What impact does this post has on youth organizing or

This post hurts

This post helps other youth-led actions for social justice? youth organizing

youth organizing.

(Place a mark on the scale above)

Who do you think this post is intended for? Who is the audience this post is trying to speak to?

What platform was this post on?

- Instagram TikTok
- Facebook YouTube
- Reddit Twitter Snapchat
- Tumblr Other

How did you find/come across this post?

- Shared by a friend
- Shared by a group or organization I follow
- On my feed, fyp or homepage
- I searched for this post (directly or indirectly using #)
- I created this post
- Other

Confidential

Page 2

What are 3 words that describe how you were feeling
when you saw this post?

Did you interact with the post?

- Yes
 No

(Interact means comment, share, like, dm/forward, etc)

Why or why not?

If you interacted with this post, describe what you did...

Was there anything interesting or important you saw happen in the comment section? If
so, briefly share.

Appendix G: Identity Wheel Activity

Confidential

Page 1

Identity Wheel Activity

This survey is based on the Identity Wheel activity. It helps you reflect on your identities and helps me learn more about how you think of yourself.

Please complete the survey below. Thank you!

What is your participant ID?

Our identities can be an important part of who we are. I want to learn more about how you think of yourself and your identities.

Reflect on your identities, and list them below. Some examples of responses are provided, but answer these questions in whatever way feels right to you.

Age

First Language

(Some examples: English, Farsi, French, Mandarin, Spanish, etc.)

You/Your Family's Socio-economic Class

(For example: Upper Class, Middle Class, Working Class, Poor)

Ability/Disability (Physical, Emotional and/or Developmental)

(For example: Able-bodied, Living w/a Disability, Living w/a Chronic Disease, Temporarily Able-Bodied (TAB))

Gender

(For example: Gender Queer, Cisgender Man, Cisgender Woman, Transgender Man, Transgender Woman, Non-Binary, Other)

Sexual Orientation

(For example: Bisexual, Fluid, Gay, Heterosexual, Lesbian, Queer, Questioning)

Race

(For example: Asian/Pacific Islander, Biracial, Black, Indigenous Peoples/Native American, Latin@, Middle Eastern, Multiracial, white)

Ethnicity

(For example: African, Anglo, Chican@, Cuban, Dutch,
French, Guamanian, Iranian, Irish, Jewish, Lakota,
Navajo, Puerto Rican, Vietnamese)

National Origin

(For example: United States, Ethiopia, Dominican
Republic, Ireland, Japan, Puerto Rico)

Religion or Spiritual Affiliation

(For example: Agnostic, Atheist, Bahai'l, Christian,
Hindu, Jewish, Muslim)

Which of these identities do you think about most
often? Check all that apply.

- Age
 - First Language
 - Socio-economic Class
 - Ability/Disability
 - Biological Sex
 - Gender
 - Race
 - National Origin
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Religion or Spiritual Affiliation
 - Ethnicity
-

Why do you think about those identities more often?

14) Which identities do you think about the least? Check all that apply.

- Age
- First Language
- Socio-economic Class
- Ability/Disability
- Biological Sex
- Gender
- Race
- National Origin
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion or Spiritual Affiliation
- Ethnicity

15) Why do you think about these identities less often?

Angela (Angie) Malorni***Curriculum Vitae***

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ACADEMIC POSITIONS**Assistant Professor**

Rutgers University
School of Social Work

Starting Fall 2022

EDUCATION

PhD	University of Washington	expected June 2022
MSW	University of Washington	December 2020
MPA	University of Washington	December 2013
BS	The Ohio State University	June 2011

SKILLS AND AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Skills: Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) Methodology, School-based Research-Practice Partnerships, Participatory Evaluation, Photovoice, Grounded Theory, Ethnographic Methods, Case Study, Community-Based Survey Development & Testing, Grant Writing

Areas of Expertise: Youth Sociopolitical Development & Organizing, Social Media & Technology, Social-Emotional Learning, Critical Youth Work/Youth Development, School Climate, YPAR Methodology, Policy Practice, Organizational Practice

AWARDS, HONORS, GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS

Social Science Research Council Just Tech Fellowship (\$200,000 grant over 2 years)	In Review
NIH Pre-Doctoral Translational Science Training Grant (TL1) (\$42,500)	06/2021- 06/2022
UW Magnuson Scholar (\$32,000)	06/2021- 06/2022
Distinction, General Exam	07/2020
Graduate and Professional Student Senate Travel Grant (\$1,000)	09/2019
William P. and Ruth Gerberding Top Scholar Fellowship (tuition + \$8,000).	03/2018
Scholarship from the Charles O. Cressey Endowment Fund (\$2,000)	09/2017
CUNY Critical Participatory Action Research, Training Scholarship (\$500)	05/2016

Hubert G. Locke Fellowship (\$2,500)	03/2013
Evans School of Public Policy & Governance Top Scholar Award (\$15,000)	09/2012
Mount Leadership Society Scholar (\$6,000)	09/2007 – 06/2009

RESEARCH INTERESTS & EXPERIENCE

Interests

Youth Development, Sociopolitical Development/Critical Consciousness, Youth Organizing, Social Media & Technology, Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), Social Justice in School Climate, Social-Emotional Learning, Social Service Systems Change

Experience

Social Media and Youth Sociopolitical Development 07/2020 – 06/2022

Principal Investigator, University of Washington School of Social Work

Aims to address the questions: (1) In what ways does social media facilitate youth sociopolitical development (SPD)? And (2) What are the limitations of social media as an effective tool for youth SPD? A multi-site YPAR case study using photovoice. Principal investigator for all research activities. NIH Award Number TL1 TR002318.

Best Starts for Kids Youth Development Measurement Project 01/2020 – 12/2021

Research Analyst, University of Washington School of Social Work

A continuation of the 2018-2019 community-based youth development measurement project (see below). I facilitated the development of participatory advisory board to oversee the refinement of the tool, conducted qualitative research into the structure and content of the survey, conducted second round of psychometric testing. Also participated in all stages/tasks of survey development and testing. Contract funded by King County Public Health. PI: Mike Spencer

COVID-19, BLM and Teacher Racial Consciousness in a Puget Sound Middle School: A collaborative autoethnography 03/2020 – 11/2020

Principal Investigator, University of Washington School of Social Work

A teacher-participatory autoethnographic project exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and BLM movement of 2020 on racial equity improvement efforts in a Puget Sound middle school. I designed the research study, recruited participants, trained participants in autoethnographic methods and managed the logistics of data collection. I will be analyzing the data alongside teachers, and the data will be integrated into a larger school improvement project in the Summer of 2020.

Pro-Justice Student Union Research & Action: School Climate and Social Justice, 12/2019 – 05/2020

Co-PI, UW & CSU School of Social Work

A participatory research-practice partnership with a high school student group in Renton Public Schools called the Pro-Justice Union (PJU). Supported Youth Participatory Action Research efforts led by PJU, and launched a complimentary research project with teachers and administrators, guided by the PJU's research results and school-based action. Managed all local

aspects of the project, and was a principal investigator. Tiffany Jones (CSU) is co-PI and funder of project.

Examining Culture of Compliance and School Discipline 12/2019 – 08/2020

*Project Manager & Research Analyst,
Co-PI, UW & CSU School of Social Work*

A research-practice partnership with a middle school in Renton Public Schools. I worked with teachers, staff and administrators on the school's racial equity team to identify pressing issues relating to school climate. We designed a research-practice project focusing on the school's culture of compliance and racial disproportionality in school discipline. It is a mixed-methods study. The racial equity team was involved in methodological design and all teachers were involved in data analysis and action-planning. Tiffany Jones (CSU) is co-PI and funder of project.

VOYCE Whakarongo Mai Youth Participation Project 06/2019 – 11/2019

Research Assistant, University of Washington School of Social Work

In partnership with the University of Auckland. Project aims to answer the question: 'What constitutes good practice in relation to ethical, culturally sound engagement and participation of children and young people involved with child protection services in programme governance, policy making, service design and research?' I contributed to a scoping review. PI: Susan Kemp

SEL Consortium Documentation Project 06/2019 – 10/2019

Research Analyst, University of Washington School of Social Work

A study of the development, process and outcomes of a 2-year research-practice partnership called the SEL Consortium. The SEL Consortium has regular participation from: 6 regional school district officials, King County Public Health, Out-of-School-Time (OST) providers, intermediary organizations and non-academic research partners. I participated in all stages/tasks of project, and of the consortium. PI: Tiffany Jones

Federal Way Public Schools: Exploring the role of Community-based Organizations in school climate and positive racial identity development 01/2019 – 12/2019

Research Assistant, University of Washington School of Social Work

A research-practice partnership with Federal Way Public Schools. Focuses on the role of community-based organizations in supporting school transformation as it relates to school climate for BIPOC students. Conducted focus groups and completed analysis. PI: Charles Lea III

**Bullying, School Climate and Racial Equity:
Using Data and Youth Perspectives to Improve School Climate** 01/2019 – 12/2019

Research Analyst, University of Washington School of Social Work

A research-practice partnership with Renton Public Schools. The purpose of the study is to better understand students' experiences as school, especially school culture and climate, experiences of bullying and experiences related to racism and other forms of oppression. I participated in all stages/tasks of project and design/facilitated interactive data analysis and improvement planning workshops with teachers. PI: Tiffany Jones & Charles Lea III

Best Starts for Kids: Youth Development Measurement 05/2018 – 12/2019

Project

Research Analyst, University of Washington, School of Social Work

Develop and validate a community-based protective and promotive youth development measurement tool that is responsive to: racial, ethnic and social identity development, social and emotional development and enabling program environments. Completed literature review, landscape assessment, lead focus groups, organized and conducted cognitive interviews, helped develop methodological plan, created survey, administered pilot, psychometric testing of survey items, worked with community partners on construct and survey development. Contract funded by King County Public Health. PI: Charles Lea III

Enhancing Data-Driven Decision Making for School Improvement at the Seattle Public Schools 09/2017 – 04/2018

Research Assistant, University of Washington, School of Social Work,

Funded by Seattle Public Schools. Partnered with district to make recommendations for student school climate survey design based on youth input. Organized and facilitated cognitive interviews with children and youth (grades K-12) across the school district. Coded qualitative data & contributed to final recommendations. PI: Todd Herrenkohl

TEACHING INTERESTS & EXPERIENCE

Interests

Community organizing, policy practice, historical foundations, research methods, social science meta-theory, adolescence/youth development, participatory practice/research, service-learning

Experience**BASW**

Social Welfare Practice III, Macro (SOC WF 312), Predoctoral Lecturer	Spring 2021
Introduction to Social Work Practice (SOC WF 200), Teaching Assistant	Winter 2018
Introduction to Social Work Practice (SOC WF 200), Teaching Assistant	Fall 2017

MSW

Poverty & Inequality (SOC W 501), Predoctoral Lecturer	Winter 2021
Intellectual & Historical Found. of Professional Social Work (SOC W 500), Grader	Fall 2020
Community-Centered & Integrated Practice Seminar (SOC W 525), Facilitator	Spring 2018

PhD

Social Science Meta-Theory and Research (SOC WL 598), Teaching Practicum	Fall 2018
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Guest Lectures

Youth Development and Youth Work Practice (BASW) <i>SOC WK 200: Intro to Social Work</i>	Fall 2017
Critical Youth Work (BASW) <i>SOCWK 200: Intro to Social Work</i>	Winter 2018
An Introduction to Critical Theory (PhD)	Fall 2019

<i>SOC WL 598: Social Science Meta-Theory</i>	
Community-based Participatory Program Evaluation (MSW)	Spring 2019
<i>Guest Lecture at University of Michigan SSW</i>	
Participatory Research with Youth (MSW/MPH/PhD)	Spring 2019
<i>SOC WL 591: Special Topics</i>	
Community-Based and Participatory Research Methods (MSW)	Fall 2019
<i>SOC WK 505: Research Methods</i>	

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

* Indicates community partner as co-author, **Indicates MSW student I supported/mentored

Peer-Reviewed Publications

8. Jones, T.M., Williford, A., **Malorni, A.**, McCowan, K., Becker, K., Halac, T., Lea, C.H., Spencer, M. The Role of Colorblind Racism and White Fragility in Maintaining Racist Bullying in Middle School. (Revise & Resubmit, November 2021)
7. **Malorni, A.**, Diaz, A., Spencer, M. & Jones, T. (2022) Autoethnography as a Tool for Research-Practice Partnerships: Facilitating Self and School Transformation. *Qualitative Social Work. (In Press)*
6. **Malorni, A.**, Lea, C.H., Richards-Schuster, K. & Spencer, M. (2022). Facilitating Youth Participatory Action Research: A scoping review of relational practices. *Children and Youth Services Review. (In Press)*
5. Jones, T.M., Diaz, A., Bruick, S., McCowan, K., Wong, D.W**, Chatterji, A**, **Malorni, A.**, & Spencer, M. (2021) Experiences and perceptions of school staff regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and racial equity: The role of colorblindness. *School Psychology*. DOI: [10.1037/spq0000464](https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000464)
4. Lea, C.H., McCowan, K., Jones, T.M., **Malorni, A.** (2021) Adult and Student Perspectives on School-Based Racial and Ethnic Equity-Informed SEL Strategies. *Psychology in Schools*. DOI: 10.1002/pits.22575
3. Lea, C.H., Jones, T.M., **Malorni, A.**, Beaver, J.* & Herrenkohl, T. (2020). Centering racial equity in measures of school climate: Perspectives of racial and ethnic minoritized students. *Journal of the Society for Social Work Research*. Doi.org/10.1086/713474
2. Herrenkohl, T., Jones, T., Lea, C., & **Malorni, A.** (2019) Leading with Data: Using an Impact-Driven Research Consortium Model for the Advancement of Racial Equity in Social Emotional Learning. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry (AJO): Social Innovations*. Doi.org/10.1037/ort0000435

1. Lea, C., **Malorni, A.**, & Jones, T. (2019). Everybody is an Artist: Arts-Based Education and Formerly Incarcerated Young Black Men's Academic and Social-Emotional Development in an Alternative School. *American Journal of Community Psychology, Vol. 64(3-4), p. 1-15. Doi 10.1002/ajcp.12378*

Under Review

3. López, A.P., Jones, T., Diaz, A., McCowan, K. & **Malorni, A.** *Strengthening Student-Teacher Relationships: Cultivating Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Learning Environments for Black, Indigenous, and Youth of Color.* (In Review, December 2021)
2. **Malorni, A.** Lea, C.H., McCowan, K., Jones, T.M. & Crumé, H.J. *Community Constructions of Youth Development: Perspectives of racially, ethnically, and gender diverse adults and youth* (In Review, September 2021)
1. **Malorni, A.** & Reagan, M.B. *Teaching Literacy Practices in Social Work Education: Strategies for Identifying Power Structures in Text.* (In Review, September, 2021)

Community & Practice Publications

Malorni, A., Jones, T., Lea, C. Spencer, M. (2021). Best Starts for Kids Youth Development Measurement Project: 2020-2021 Report. *Prepared for King County Public Health.*

Malorni, A., Jones, T., McCowan, K. & Lea, C. (2019). Using Data and Youth Perspectives to Improve School Climate and Racial Equity Practice. *Prepared for the Renton Public School District.*

Jones, T., Lea, C., **Malorni, A.**, Crumé, H.J. & McCowan, K. (2019). Best Starts for Kids Youth Development Measurement Project: 2018-2019 Report. *Prepared for King County Public Health.*

Manuscripts in Progress

Jones, T.M., **Malorni, A.**, Becker, T., Lea, C.H. & Crumé, H.J. A Scoping Review of Community-Based Measures for Positive Youth Development.

Malorni, A. Social Media and Youth Organizing: A Theoretical Review

Malorni, A., Diaz, A., Keegan T.* & Spencer, M. Exposing Cracks in the Foundation of American Schools: An autoethnographic study of racial justice, schools one year after COVID and Black Lives Matter movement of 2020.

Jones, T.M., **Malorni, A.**, McCowan, K., Lea, C. H., Spencer, M. You can't fix what you won't see: Examining the way colorblind racism undermines racial equity efforts in middle school.

- Malorni, A.** Social Media and Youth Organizing: A Digital Media Photovoice Project
- Malorni, A.** Youth Sociopolitical Development, the COVID-19 Pandemic and Black Lives Matter: A multi-site case study
- Malorni, A.** Constructions of Sociopolitical Self and Community on Social Media: A multi-site case study of youth organizers
- Malorni, A.** From participation to transformation: A youth participatory action research study of youth sociopolitical power-building through social media
- Malorni, A.,** Jones, T.M. & Lea, C.L. A Research-Practice Approach to School Climate Improvement: Translating data into action for racial justice
- Malorni, A.** Youth Critical Consciousness and Social Media: A visual and textual analysis using Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model of Communication
- Lea, C.H., McCowan, K., Jones T.M., **Malorni, A.** & Crumé, H.J. & Youth Perspectives on Racial, Ethnic, and Gender identity Development and their Experience in prevention and Health Promotion Programming.
- Lea, C.H., Crumé, H.J., Jones T.M., **Malorni, A.,** McCowan, K. & Ramirez, J. Youth of Color Perspectives on the Development of Community-Based Survey: Using Cognitive Interviews to Evaluate Items for Measuring Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Identity, Social-Emotional Development, and Program Social Environments.

Presentations

21. **Malorni, A.** (April 2022) Social Media and Youth Sociopolitical Development: A YPAR Study of Self and Community Construction. American Education Research Association (AERA) Annual Program Meeting, San Diego, CA.
20. **Malorni, A.** (Jan. 2022). A Scoping Review of Relationship-Building Practices in Youth Participatory Action Research. Oral Poster Presentation, Society for Social Work Research (SSWR), Washington DC.
19. **Malorni, A.** (Oct 2021) *Social Media and Youth Sociopolitical Development: A Scoping Review of Theory*. Oral Presentation, Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Annual Program Meeting, Orlando, FL.
18. **Malorni, A.** (Jan. 2022). Autoethnography As a Tool for Research-Practice Partnerships: Facilitating Self and School Transformation. In Promoting Racial Justice in the School Context before and during COVID-19. Symposium Presentation, Society for Social Work Research (SSWR), Washington DC.
17. **Malorni, A.** (Oct 2021) *Re-defining Positive Youth Development: Perspectives of Racially, Ethnically, and Gender Diverse Adults/Youth*. Oral Presentation, Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Annual Program Meeting, Orlando, FL.
16. **Malorni, A.** (Jan 2021). *Facilitating Critical Inquiry and Action with Youth: PAR Process and Practice*. Oral Poster Presentation, Online.

15. Jones, T.M., **Malorni, A.**, Lea, C.L. (Oct. 2020) *Positive Youth Development Programs Promote Social, Emotional, Racial, Ethnic and Gender Identity Development*. European Society for Prevention Research. Oral Presentation. Online.
14. **Malorni, A.** (Jan. 2020). *Identity and Socio-Political Development: Exploring Levels and Roles of Identity in Critical Education, Participation and Social Action in Youth Work*. Oral Poster Presentation. Society for Social Work Research (SSWR), Washington DC.
13. Lea, C.H., **Malorni, A.** & Jones, T.M. (Jan. 2020). *"Everybody Is an Artist": Arts-Based Education and Formerly Incarcerated Young Black Men's Academic and Social-Emotional Development in an Alternative School*. Symposium Paper. Society for Social Work Research (SSWR), Washington DC.
12. **Malorni, A.**, Lea, C.H., Jones, T.M., & Crumé,, H.J. (Jan. 2020). *Program Leader and Youth Perspectives on the Role of Positive Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Identity, Social-Emotional Development, and Program Social Environments for the Development of Community-Based Survey*. Symposium Paper. Society for Social Work Research (SSWR), Washington DC.
11. Jones, T.M., **Malorni, A.**, Lea, C.H. & Crumé,, H.J. (Jan. 2020). *Evaluating Community-Based Positive Youth Development Programs: A Scoping Review of Measures of Positive Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Identity, Social-Emotional Development, and Program Social Environments*. Symposium Paper. Society for Social Work Research (SSWR), Washington DC.
10. Lea, C.H., **Malorni, A.**, Crumé,, H.J. & Jones, T.M. (Jan. 2020). *Youth of Color Perspectives on the Development of Community-Based Survey: Using Cognitive Interviews to Evaluate Items for Measuring Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Identity, Social-Emotional Development, and Program Social Environments*. Symposium Paper. Society for Social Work Research (SSWR), Washington DC.
9. **Malorni, A.** (Oct. 2019). *Critical Reading: Teaching understanding, meaning-making and critique in social work education*. Interactive Workshop in the Teaching Methods and Learning Styles Track. Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Annual Program Meeting (APM). Denver, CO.
8. **Malorni, A.**, Jones, T. M., & Lea, C.H., (May 2019). *Democratization of Cross-Sector Data Systems: Youth participation, equity and effective out of school time programming*. Oral Presentation. Society for Prevention Research (SPR), San Francisco.
7. Jones, T.M., **Malorni, A.**, Lea, C.H., & Crumé,, H.J., (May 2019). *A Systematic Review of Racial and Ethnic Identity Development, Social Emotional Development, and Enabling Environments Measures for County Wide Program Evaluation*. Oral Presentation. Society for Prevention Research (SPR), San Francisco.
6. Lea., C.H., Jones, T.M., **Malorni, A.**, & Crumé, H.J., (May 2019). *Youth Perspectives on Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Identity Development and Their Experience in Prevention and Health Promotion Programming*. Oral Presentation. Society for Prevention Research (SPR), San Francisco.

5. Herrenkohl, T.I., Jones, T.M., Lea, C.L., & **Malorni, A.**, (Jan. 2019). *Conceptual Foundations of a Research Partnership to Advance the Practice and Assessment of Social Emotional Learning*. Oral Presentation, Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR), San Francisco.
4. Lea., C.H., Jones, T.M., **Malorni, A.**, Herrenkohl, T.I., (Jan. 2019). *Beyond the Numbers: Exploring Students' Perceptions of the Factors Associated with Equity in School Climate*. Oral Presentation, Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR), San Francisco.
3. Herrenkohl, T., Lea, C., Jones, T. & **Malorni, A.** (Jan. 2019). *Leading with Data: Using an impact-driven research consortium model for the advancement of social emotional learning and youth development programs*. Society of Social Work Research (SSWR). San Francisco, CA.
2. **Malorni, A.** (May 2018). *Youth Participatory Program Evaluation and Research: Youth Voice in Organizational Practice*. King County Public Health. Seattle, WA.
1. Jones, T., Lea, C. & **Malorni, A.** (April 2018). *Beyond the Numbers: Exploring Students' perceptions of the factors associated with equity in school climate*. Road Map Region Social and Emotional Learning Symposium, Renton, WA.

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Social Policy Research Associates, Regional Data Collection 09/2019 – 03/2020
Seattle, WA

Working on the Local Proof Points initiative, under its Washington State Strategy to evaluate the formation and implementation of local improvement networks in South King County, as well as their resultant activities and outcomes and progress toward addressing racial disparities in academic outcomes.

Harm Reduction Research and Treatment Center 09/2019 – 06/2020
Housing First, Meaningful Activities Lead
Seattle, WA

Working with Harm Reduction Research and Treatment Center (HaRRT) in their Meaningful Activities program. Facilitated and implemented participatory program development (community garden and memorial) at 1811 Eastlake, a supportive housing unit serving formerly homeless adults with chronic alcohol use disorders.

City of Seattle, Youth Program Lead & Facilitator May 2017-Sept 2018
Seattle, WA

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) facilitation, curriculum development and staff coaching. Worked directly with youth ages 12-18 in a public program at the Teen Life Centers. Worked with youth ages 12-24 in a public program primarily serving low-income youth, youth of color, immigrant and refugee youth and youth with disabilities. Via youth programming, we

explored issues of: gentrification and its' impact on social spaces for youth, issues of consent in school sex education and interrupting racism in Seattle Public Schools.

School's Out Washington, Youth Work Coach & Program Assessor May 2017 – Jan 2019
Seattle, WA

Provided direct coaching to youth development and out-of-school time (OST) adult youth workers across King County. Facilitated self-directed goal setting, action planning and technical support. Also provided external Youth Program Quality Assessment (an observational tool) to youth-serving sites across King and Pierce counties. Helped sites translate data into action for program improvement.

School's Out Washington, Youth Program Quality Coordinator Sept 2015 – May 2017
Seattle, WA

Facilitated site program assessment and instructor training, managed state-wide assessment and continuous improvement planning, developed and facilitated peer learning community meetings, design and deliver workshops for Weikart Center Youth Work Methods and other topics (social and emotional learning, cooperative learning, critical youth studies, youth-led evaluation, service-learning, active-participatory approaches, youth voice, etc). Facilitator of workshops on structural racism in youth work settings for youth workers & program administrators.

City of Seattle, Teen Services Analyst Jan 2013 – Sept 2015
Seattle, WA

Designed and implemented data systems and analyzed data for public afterschool and summer programs in the Teen Programs division. Facilitated and constructed unit-wide theory of change for Youth Employment and Service-Learning unit, quarterly reporting and improvement planning, facilitated youth-led program evaluation, trained adults and youth YESL staff on program evaluation. Included youth participatory evaluation.

Hanford Challenge, Outreach Coordinator; Advisory Board Chair Apr 2015 – Sept 2015
Seattle, WA

Organized, coordinated and implemented outreach and public education events, resources and web tools to engage youth people in environmental clean-up advocacy. Held position on Public Involvement Committee for the Hanford Advisory Board. Conducted issue-specific research, grant writing and management of public participation grant. Lobbying at the annual Alliance for Nuclear Accountability Day in Washington DC.

City of Seattle, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Teen/Youth Mentor June 2011 – Apr 2015
Seattle, WA

Public teen program design, facilitation and youth mentorship for city-wide teen services. Programs include: social and emotional learning, job training, recreation, environmental stewardship, community engagement and service-learning, 21st Century Skills, and social justice education. Worked with youth ages 12-24 in a public program primarily serving low-income youth, youth of color, immigrant and refugee youth and youth with disabilities.

The Mosaic Project, Intern Fall 2009, 2010
Oakland, CA

Facilitated immersive program for social and emotional learning and anti-racism as part of an evidence-based curriculum for middle school age youth. Logistic coordination for daily operations.

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community Service

Member, Expanded Learning Opportunity Network (WA) State Out-of-School Time Policy Advocacy	2019 – Present
UW Global Health & Urban at UW Stakeholder, Creating Mental Health Friendly Cities for Youth	2019 - Present
Content Consultant, UW College of Education’s Cultivate Learning	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) • Youth Driven Spaces Module for Practitioners 	2020
Convener & Facilitator, UW Social and Emotional Learning Consortium Research-Practice Partnership with:	2017 – 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 7 school district representatives ○ County governmental offices ○ Community-based organizations ○ Education & OST Intermediaries 	
Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) Coaching/Consultation for:	2015 – Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • King County Youth Advisory Council • Federal Way Public Schools’ Young Scholars Program (Lakota Kings) • UW Cultivate Learning • Youth Development Executives of King County • Seattle Techbridge, Girls Who Code • Skyway Youth Network Collaborative • Futurewise • King County Public Health • Seattle Parks and Recreation • Renton Public Schools, Student Pro-Justice Union • Seattle Public Schools Office of Research & Evaluation 	
Labor & Tenants Rights Organizer, Seattle Solidarity Network	2011 – 2018
Organizer, SPD Police Accountability and Anti-Police Brutality Campaign	2011 - 2013

University Service

Faculty, MSW Program Community-Centered and Integrative Practice (CCIP) Concentration	2018 - Present
Faculty Recruitment Committee, Elected Representative	2018-2020
Graduate Professional Student Library Advisory Committee, Elected Representative	2019-2020
For a Democratic University (FADU), Officer	2011-2013
Evans School Labor Interest Group, Founding Member	2012-2013

Professional Service

Senior Lead Volunteer Coordinator for Annual Society of Social Work and Research (SSWR) Conference	2019 - 2021
Lead Deputy Volunteer Coordinator for Annual Society of Social Work and Research (SSWR) Conference	2018 - 2019
Deputy Volunteer Coordinator for Annual Society of Social Work and Research (SSWR) Conference	2017 - 2018
Peer Reviewer, Advances in Social Work	2021
Peer Reviewer, Journal of Community Practice	2020-2022
Peer Reviewer, Health Education & Behavior	2020
Peer Reviewer, Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare	2018

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS & LICENSE

Society for Social Work Research (SSWR), Member
Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA), Member
Association for Community Organization and Social Administration (ACOSA), Member
Society for Prevention Research (SPR), Member
Council for Social Work Education (CSWE), Member
National After-School Association (NAAA), Washington Ambassador
Washington Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Network, Member
Philosophy for Children, University of Washington, Member