

Joining Indivisible as a New Activist:
A Case Study of Learning, Commitment, and Community

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in
Teachers College, Columbia University

2024

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Abstract

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After the 2016 United States presidential election, people became newly involved in social action and civic engagement efforts around the nation. This participation involved joining both established and newly developing groups. One newly developed group was Indivisible. Indivisible chapters were created all over the country; group goals included resisting the aims of the Trump administration and saving democracy. The chapters looked different depending on the local context and group member composition. Some early participants moved on; other activists remained involved in this work over time. Not enough has been understood about their reasons for staying committed, or what kind of learning and changes resulted from their involvement in these communities. This study considered the Indivisible participants who were new to activism, and their experiences with learning, sustained involvement, and community.

This study focused on the factors that kept new activists involved in Indivisible social action efforts from 2017 to 2020, what participants learned or how they changed through their involvement, and the roles of community in participants' learning or development. Participants were involved for a minimum of two years; 93% had been involved for four to five-plus years at the time of the study (n=51). All of the study participants were able to articulate what they had learned through their participation in Indivisible activities. Learning more about the experiences of new activists was prioritized to understand how to support adult learners drawn to social activism and civic engagement in the future.

This qualitative case study included accounts from participants in Indivisible groups from around the United States. Data were collected from 55 participants who submitted demographic questionnaires with critical incident questionnaires, with a subset of 22 participants then doing a follow-up interview. A different subset of four participants also participated in a focus group.

The study found eight factors that sustained involvement, seven sub-factors that could help to sustain involvement, and three factors that may hinder involvement. The most significant factors were: (1) Community relationships and friendships, (2) Making a difference and thinking more was possible, and (3) Having a sense of duty, and belief that quitting was not an option. The most reported sub-factors were: (1) Supportive family members and friends and (2) Indivisible's flexible format helping participants make it work for their interests and contexts.

There were eleven findings specific to learning. The learning and changes findings included: (1) Participants learned about democracy and activism; (2) Participants learned to contribute and work together in community; (3) Participants had increased consciousness; (4) Participants experienced leadership or personal development; (5) Participants reported becoming more empowered, assertive, and politically engaged; (6) Learning was supported and facilitated in Indivisible communities through several community aspects.

The findings of this study may be of interest to adult learning professionals interested in learning that took place within social action or civic engagement activities, and for people seeking to encourage and support new participation in social action organizations.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the people who have supported me and my learning to complete this research. Thank you everyone below, and everyone I'm missing.

Kate Rockey-Harris—thank you for the invitation to the Adult Learning and Leadership holiday party before I had applied to the program. I am grateful for your years of support—first as a work colleague, then a classmate, and now as a friend and mentor.

Karen Grossman—thank you for meeting me on Zoom and by phone so we could check in with each other, and push and support each other. I can't wait to read your dissertation.

Thank you, Professor Bitterman, for serving as my faculty sponsor. Your support and belief in us have been vital. I appreciate and admire how quickly and thoroughly you synthesize new information. You're so sharp, and I wish I had more classes in my future with you. Thank you too, Professor Bitterman, for creating a wonderful dissertation conversation group—the diversity of topics was interesting, fresh, and challenging.

Thank you, Professor Marsick. I still think back to your advanced seminar where an early conversation about my research direction helped get me on the right track. I appreciate your encouragement, depth of knowledge, and commitment to the Adult Learning Program.

Thank you, Professor Pierre Faller. I appreciate your willingness to participate as a member of my dissertation committee. Your generosity and consideration of my request are inspiring. I hope to be able to do the same for someone else some day.

Thank you, Professor Kate Ascher. I appreciate having had your guidance, example, and support over the years. Your students have raved about your classes over the years. I feel so fortunate to have you as a reader now.

Thank you to Rocky Schwarz for your expertise and kindness. I was so happy to receive your response when I was a bit lost, and I appreciate your guidance.

Thank you to my mom, Jeannie Stockton. I cherish our calls: 5:30 a.m. for you, 8:30 a.m. ET for me, as we're both getting to work. Thank you for being my biggest cheerleader. I can call you at any moment—and you're ready to listen and engage help.

Thank you to my dad, David Stockton. I appreciate your thoughtfulness, matter-of-fact directness, and how you're always ready to bust out a legal pad and make a list. You have great problem-solving skills and the ability to look ahead.

Thank you to my brother, Michael Stockton. I can always count on you and your good-natured logic, willing technical expertise, and generous and ongoing kindnesses.

Thank you to my husband, Ian King. You have worked so hard to make things work. Thank you for making countless wonderful vegan dinners, and taking Elliott ice skating, sledding, and playing basketball as I worked on this research.

Thank you to my son, Elliott King. Your positivity and encouragement have kept me going; you are wise beyond your years. Thank you for adding so much joy and humor to my life. I appreciate your world views, your love of books, and the wonderful person you are.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this research study. Often, you gave me pause with your candor, intelligence, critical thinking, humility, humor, and great quotes. I appreciate all the ways you volunteer your time. Thank you for your generous participation.

J. S. K.

Dedication

To Elliott, Ian, Myrtle and Doyle

Thanks for always being with me, both in home and in spirit.

I will always love your senses of humor and how you care for and about others.

To all the research study participants

Your determination to stand up for what you believe in is admirable and inspiring.

Thank you.

Chapter 1: Introduction

What advice would you give to a person who was curious about, but not currently involved in this work?

I would say definitely, really consider it. Because if you pay any attention to what's going on, you're probably pretty depressed and pretty stressed out. And you will be so much less stressed out if you're actually part of something, and doing something about it. The best stress reliever is to be doing something. You're going to feel your worst if you're not doing something. We just had new members and a woman wasn't sure if she wanted to do climate stuff or defend democracy and go to each of the action teams. But I said, just join one because to really do it, you know, it's a lot of work. Just pick one thing. Focus on that. Learn what needs to be done, come up with an effective action, and trust the other people in this will be doing that for the other teams. If you want to change, you can change. (Participant 47, 5+ years of Indivisible experience)

This research was focused on the learning experiences of adults who became newly involved in activism through their participation in Indivisible chapters after the 2016 United States presidential election (Roth, 2018). Indivisible started as a progressive guide as a response to the stated priorities of the Trump administration, which spanned 2017-2020. Indivisible groups with new activist members developed around the United States (Fuentes & Mahn, 2017). Both seasoned and emerging activists participated in Indivisible groups and initiatives. Because the guide and organization did not form until after the election, there were opportunities for first-time activists to join and quickly assume leadership responsibilities. There was no roadmap for how their efforts would unfold; each group had to decide how they would interact with the Indivisible guide, which efforts or actions they would participate in, and what was important to their local community.

In order to understand more about the context in which Donald J. Trump was elected President of the United States in November 2016, and why there were strong reactions to his win and early presidency, the following background section in this chapter may prove useful. The

element of surprise, and resulting feelings of despair, influenced some people to decide to become involved in social action or civic engagement pursuits, and to become active within this new group in the public sphere. This study was approached from an Adult Learning point of view and sought to center the learner who had become meaningfully involved in social action efforts for the first time. The new social action involvement occurred at a specific moment in history. This study was focused on the factors that kept new activists involved in social action efforts, what they learned through their participation in Indivisible groups and related social or civic engagement efforts, and the role of community in their learning and self-reported personal changes along the way.

Background and Context for the Study

Before the election, many people across the United States thought Hillary Rodham Clinton would be elected the 45th President of the United States (Dwyer et al., 2019). This presumption was supported by newspapers, radio and television shows, and public surveys across the country (Tumulty et al., 2016). The morning of Election Day, November 6, 2016, Donald Trump was given 28% odds of winning by FiveThirtyEight (<https://fivethirtyeight.com/>) and 17% at Betfair (<https://www.betfair.com/>) (Wagner et al., 2018). Fourteen out of 15 national polls in the first week of November 2016 predicted that Clinton would win (Minkus et al., 2019). Even in July 2016, the *New York Times*' predictive model was giving Clinton a 76% chance of becoming president (Katz, 2016). Little girls, attired in the eponymous Clinton pantsuit, joined their parents at the polls on election day. This was consistently projected to be a momentous occasion: the United States would finally elect a woman president (Bean, 2019). As the results came in on Election night, Democratic candidates' watch parties became serious and grim (Bochner, 2018; Greenberg & Levin, 2019).

During the campaigning period, and for many years prior, Donald Trump frequently made public comments that were racist, sexist, and ableist. His disparaging remarks were specific to Mexican people, African American people, Muslims, women, and people with disabilities (Harnish, 2017; Heaney, 2018; Justice & Stanley, 2016; Schaffner et al., 2018). Pulido et al. (2019) called his strategy of using racism in the public sphere “spectacular racism” (p. 521). As a candidate, Trump expressed his intention to dismantle the Affordable Care Act, build a wall along the Mexico border and make Mexico pay for it, deport non-white immigrants, and form a stronger relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin (Payne, 2017; Tumulty et al., 2016). The presidential election results of 2016 came as a surprise to many. The words “shock” and “shocking” were used to describe the event (Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Greenberg & Levin, 2019; Maduro, 2017; McKee et al., 2019). There were discussions about “collective trauma” (Rosa & Bonila, 2017) and “incomprehension” (Michelson, 2019) that occurred post-election. Happer et al. (2019) called it a “break in mainstream, consensual reality” (p. 3). The American Academy of Pediatrics offered recommendations to parents unsure how to talk to their children about the results, and “how to help each other cope with disturbing rhetoric” (Knopf, 2017, p. 1). Colleges around the country set up counseling for concerned students (Knott & Najmabadi, 2016). Fear was prevalent in certain groups, such as immigrants, who feared deportation (Andrade, 2017; Greenberg & Levin, 2019; Preston & Medina, 2016). The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) recorded 300 hate-related incidents within the first week after the election (Kennedy, 2019). Many progressives wanted to prevent some of Trump’s campaign promises from turning into policy, and to find community (Beyerlein & Ryan, 2018; Greenberg & Levin, 2019).

On January 21, 2017, approximately a half million people participated in the Women’s March in Washington, D.C. (Garza, 2017), with an estimated 4 million people participating throughout the United States (Fisher, 2019). Many people were upset about what Trump had said about women during his candidacy pre-election. The Women’s March occurred the day after Inauguration Day. Counting all of the separate protests around the United States, it was “the largest one-day mobilization in the history of the United States” (Garza, 2017, p. 225), with participants in 653 locations around the United States. Fisher (2019) stated that, despite earlier protests, “the Resistance as a movement did not really start until his presidency formally began” (p. 30). The Women’s March could be thought of as the “trigger” (Fisher, 2019). The march included religious leaders and faith-based groups. Some members of clergy and laity had an emotional response to the election, and because of their relationships with faith communities, they turned to them to process their emotions (Beyerlein & Ryan, 2018). Some respondents indicated they felt a call to action because of their religion, and many wanted to attend to “do something” to express their outrage at the election (Beyerlein & Ryan, 2018, p. 204). This emotional component served for some as an initial motivating factor to become involved. The Women’s March also provided the opportunity for participants to meet other people with similar concerns and to develop interest in becoming involved in a more meaningful way.

Fisher (2019) explains how the *Indivisible Guide* developed directly after the November 2016 election, starting with a Google Doc created by dozens of former congressional staffers, including Leah Greenberg and Ezra Levin, from which groups formed and developed around the country (p. 25). The *Indivisible Guide* (Indivisible, 2020), an online publication, provided a strategy to unite Americans against the Trump agenda (Indivisible 2020). It used tactics that had been effective for the Tea Party (Cole & Stinnett, 2017; Fisher, 2019; Greenberg & Levin, 2019)

and offered tips on what concerned people could do immediately on a local level (Gose & Skocpol, 2019). In Brooklyn, New York, Rabbi Rachel Timoner of Congregation Beth Elohim (CBE) and District 15 City Councilmember Brad Lander founded a group called *#GetOrganizedBK*. That group harnessed the power of residents across Brooklyn into several working groups and focused on canvassing, racial justice, helping elect progressive candidates in the New York City area, and gender equity (Action Network website, 2021).

Jaffe (2017) wrote that the Trump administration's "attacks on multiple vulnerable populations right at the outset drove millions into the streets, pushed thousands into joining or creating new political organizations, and turned many occasional voters into die-hard activists" (p. 182). Graff (2017) described how the election results led formerly uninvolved women to join resistance groups. Fisher (2019) wrote that Resistance efforts "benefitted from the moral outrage of Americans who were not previously politically engaged or connected" (p. 18). Civic engagement increased in the United States post-2016 election, and many people took on active roles, even if they had not previously been engaged in political or advocacy organizations (Greenberg & Levin, 2019). In addition to *Indivisible* and *#GetOrganizedBK*, some of the other groups that quickly formed were *#KnockEveryDoor*, *Swing Left*, and *Run for Something* (Holland, 2017). Fisher (2019) found that many participants engaged in social justice activities cared about more than one area of activism.

It turned out that people concerned about what Trump might do as president had valid reasons to be worried. His campaign speeches were not 'just talk,' as some had thought they would be; his administration took action. For those who cared about religious freedom and the rights of immigrants, by January 27, 2017, President Trump had unveiled Executive Order 13769, also known in the media as the "Muslim ban." This Executive Order was superseded by a

similar one (Executive Order 13780), which banned most people who wished to enter the United States from the countries of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen. It also decreased the overall number of refugees eligible for entry into the United States (Pierce & Meissner, 2017). Because of Trump's prior comments about people from predominantly Muslim countries and the timing of this executive order during Trump's first month in office, concern grew as to which of Trump's other campaign promises he might tackle next. From the beginning, the Trump Administration unveiled regressive policies, which resulted in outrage and action by members of the general public (Fisher, 2019; Greenberg & Levin, 2019). The weekend after Executive Order 13769 took effect, the ACLU raised \$24 million, six times what the ACLU typically raised in an entire year (Mettler, 2017).

For those concerned about the status of reproductive rights, President Trump showed he was serious about his anti-choice rhetoric. He reinstated and expanded the global gag rule (Bingenheimer & Skuster, 2017). This policy essentially prohibited the United States from giving funds to non-government organizations abroad that also provided abortion information or access. Trump's expansion pulled U.S. funding earmarked for HIV/AIDS, Ebola, childhood vaccinations, and malaria treatment if the organization also provided abortion services or related counseling (Filipovic, 2017). Several of Trump's choices for key positions in government mirrored his reproductive rights stance: Vice-President Mike Pence; Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson, Secretary of Health and Human Services Tom Price, and FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb (Pollitt, 2017, p. 67). Trump selected Cabinet members who were not supportive of LGBTQ protections, decided transgender people would not be permitted to serve in the military, and removed protections for LGBTQ federal employees (Gonzalez et al., 2018). The Trump administration cut informational

advertising by 90% that educated the public about the healthcare plan options with the Affordable Care Act and the enrollment deadlines (Goodnough & Pear, 2017). Universal healthcare proponents realized the Affordable Care Act was in great danger. Trump had a subsequent impact after leaving office: his Supreme Court appointees were instrumental in repealing *Roe vs. Wade* (Tanne, 2022).

Many of President Trump's appointees were key to carrying out his administration's agenda. Kirstjen Nielsen, as Secretary of Homeland Security, deliberately misled Congress when she asserted there was not a policy of separating children from their parents at the southern border (Nichols, 2019; Stahl, 2018). The public was not fully briefed on the number of children who were separated from their families. While the number was initially published as 2,737, later reports suggested it may have been thousands more (Edyburn & Meek, 2021; Jordan, 2019). By June 2021, the United States had identified more than 3,900 children who had been separated from their families under the Biden Administration's Family Reunification Task Force (SPLC, 2022). The records of child separation kept during the Trump administration were incomplete, making the family reunification process much more difficult. The separation of families and the detention of children could have negative effects, such as "damaged attachment relationships, traumatization, toxic stress and wider detrimental effects on immigrant communities" (Wood, 2018, p. 1). This was another policy that led to the widespread Families Belong Together protests, and organizing efforts by groups like RAICES (The Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services) and Together and Free (Fisher, 2018; Munguia, 2018; Nguyen, 2018). The *Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights* listed an extensive account of the Trump Administration's many rollbacks to civil and human rights (Leadership Conference, 2020).

Prior to the election of President Trump, many (future) Indivisible social action participants thought that keeping up-to-date with the news, signing petitions, voting, and donating was enough; this changed post-2016 election (Greenberg & Levin, 2019, p. 84). Greenberg and Levin discussed how Trump's election "radically changed" their involvement in political activity post-2016 Election:

Something about November 2016 shook the way we understood the world... This kind of faith in the system is more commonly found in people who have benefitted from the system- fold with one or another kind of privilege. That means even as we're organizing and taking action, we also have to rethink how we understand the world. (p. 154)

Greenberg and Levin *could* potentially be speaking to the experience of having a disorienting dilemma, and ultimately having their frames of reference shift (Mezirow, 1994). Because previous levels of participation had not been enough to prevent the election of President Trump, some Indivisible group members became more directly involved. Though it was not possible to block Cabinet confirmations because of the number of elected Republicans, one political strategy employed was to cause the confirmation process to be difficult and "as politically damaging as possible" (Greenberg & Levin, 2019, p. 72).

As organizational leaders, Greenberg and Levin (2019) surveyed and interviewed Indivisible chapter leaders and found one of the main reasons for engagement post-election was "community" and a desire for connection with other people (pp. 84-85). In addition, Greenberg and Levin asserted that prior experiences in lobbying or politics were not necessary to make a difference; instead, a person's prior knowledge, interests, and experiences were important and valuable to the movement, and that "you're not just a checkbook or a petition signer, but a leader in training" (p. 88). The Indivisible groups theoretically tried to meet and involve people where they were; potential members did not need a special background to qualify or add value. Barbara Andes, of the Roanoke Indivisible group, said "I've run bake sales. This is sort of like a big-ass

bake sale” (Greenberg & Levin, 2019, p. 93). Indivisible’s professed openness to have people opt in and take on what they felt capable of, as well as offering the possibility of further developing as leaders through direct action, offered an example of how social action participants found an entry-point role that suited their advocacy goals.

Indivisible focused on areas of power, and how constituents could hold power in influential ways outside of just voting. The *Indivisible Guide* gave people upset about the 2016 election results something specific they could do (Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Roth, 2018, p. 541), which was welcome for people without deep activism knowledge. Greenberg and Levin (2019) emphasized the importance of working in groups because “groups are capable of a lot more than a single person, and their influence is broader.... Groups have the numbers, legitimacy, and capacity to do more than individuals” (p. 103), and banding together with other people would lead to more power. In thinking about past social action work, Horton (2003) previously identified the importance of people coming together and operating within organizations or groups in order to hold power and get more done. Greenberg and Levin (2019) specifically addressed the importance of documenting social action with photos and videos, as these could effectively communicate to the general public (p. 114). Effective storytelling was a focus an activism novice might not be aware of when they first joined an organization. Greenberg and Levin cited the example of politicians who looked heartless when cancer survivors and people with disabled children started sharing their stories publicly (p. 125). Indivisible chapters used humor (p. 125) and “tactical innovation” (p. 123) in group efforts. Having people with diverse backgrounds may have helped bring new ideas to the forefront of social action initiatives (Greenberg & Levin, 2019).

Indivisible believed that one-off or short-term mobilizations were not enough for lasting change (Greenberg & Levin, 2019, p. 197). The group founders asserted that “organizing is about building power. It’s about building a shared sense of purpose, developing leaders, settling on strategy, creating tactics, and, at the most basic level, just figuring out how to work well with others” (p. 197). This was community based-work; little could be accomplished without other member support. The need for learning how to have effective organizing was on the minds of the Indivisible national leaders. Roth (2018) wrote in 2017 that the organization was fundraising for “‘InvisiSchools’—designed to give ‘local leadership’ the ability to better organize on the ground” (p. 544). Marshall Ganz, a Harvard professor and a former Director of Organizing for the United Farm Workers (UFW), was one of the people who offered help in creating such workshops. Greenberg and Levin (2019) met with Ganz as Indivisible evolved, and his writings directly related to this study. While Greenberg and Levin talked quite a bit about democracy in *We are Indivisible*, the administration’s effects on family separation, climate policy, and family planning were also motivating concerns.

Social action pursuits have always been a part of adult learning, and the process is necessarily interdisciplinary. Morin (2001) discussed the importance of encouraging a kind of learning that allowed for a person to understand “general, fundamental problems and insert partial, circumscribed knowledge within them” rather than relying on “fragmented learning” that was separated by subject areas and did not allow learners to make connections (p. 12). He stated, “We should teach methods of grasping mutual relations and reciprocal influences between parts and the whole in a complex world” (p. 12). Horton (2003) believed in “a holistic approach to education,” involving the overlapping topics within life together, considering the whole person, and not separating education from life (p. xii). Michelson (2020) expressed her hopes for

suggestions and ways in which academics could “move beyond our own intellectual silos” (p. 95) in relation to the challenges of being an adult educator during the Trump administration era. She was unsure what the field should be doing; she explained that transformative learning was not a neutral theory, as “the social goal it claims to further is deeply political” (p. 95). Daloz et al. (1996) discussed the importance of being able to work with complexity and interdependence among people and systems. Eduard Lindeman (cited in Brookfield, 1987b) thought that “every social action group should at the same time be an adult education group, and I go even so far as to believe that all successful adult education groups sooner or later become social action groups” (Lindeman, 1945, p. 12). At his core, Lindeman advocated for the promotion of democratic ideals through “everyday social living,” and within groups, people participated in discussion, collaborative decision making, and attempts to understand each other (Brookfield, 1997, p. iv). The adult learning field has emphasized the importance of discussion, reflection, and creating spaces where learners’ voices can be heard. These were some of the many voices that informed the construction of this study to learn more about the learning experiences of new activists.

Research Problem Statement

The Trump administration policies were viewed as targeting groups, including people of color, women, LGBTQ communities, those who practiced religions other than Christianity, the poor, residents of “blue states” identified as not supporting Trump, and children without U.S. citizenship (The Leadership Conference, 2021). Administration decisions negatively affected disenfranchised people and communities; many of these decisions were projected to have adverse long-term consequences. As a result of the anger and fear prevalent after the 2016 presidential election, many people became involved in various forms of civic engagement or

social action groups like Indivisible (Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Meyer et al., 2018). Even with the subsequent, more progressive administration of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., there was still more work for an active and engaged citizenry (Greenberg & Levin, 2019). Determined leaders and resilient volunteers continued to work against regressive policies, and participants who are civically aware and engaged are needed.

As introduced at the beginning of Chapter 1, this study was constructed to understand more about the learning experiences of new activists who joined Indivisible chapters after the 2016 election, with a focus on what caused these participants to stay involved. After the January 6, 2021 attack on the United States Capitol (Khavin et al., 2021) and the sustained attacks on voter rights (Brennan Center, 2021), adult educators seeking to foster civic engagement needed to learn more about what kept community members learning and participating despite setbacks. It became worthwhile to consider what citizens learned through their participation in social action causes in new groups, to then learn possible future applications. At this critical time with authoritarian politics on the rise (Giroux, 2024), it is important to understand more about what sustains involvement and supports learning for new adult activists, so that the future well-being of the United States and its residents may be ensured.

Research Purpose and Research Questions

An examination of the literature focused on social action involvement, post the 2016 election, showed that the research related to the learning experiences of participants involved in progressive group communities during the 2017-2020 presidential administration was limited. Research done during the early Trump administration considered transformative learning during the first year (Schroeder et al., 2020). Gose and Skocpol (2019), Skocpol et al. (2020), and Frank (2020) studied the resistance work of groups of citizen activists as sociologists, and directly

asked why participants became involved in this work. The study described herein was inspired by the above works. Indivisible was chosen as the focus organization for this study, in part because of its newness. No one could have been a member of Indivisible prior to the 2016 elections, because the *Indivisible Guide* (and subsequent organization and groups) was specifically created in response to the election of President Trump. As a result, everyone involved with Indivisible had joined a newer organization. They had their own background—or lack of background—in advocacy work, their own personal and professional experiences, and their own reasons to join. The researcher believed a deeper understanding of the experiences of Indivisible members new to social action work, and who stayed involved a minimum of two years, could be helpful to practitioners seeking to educate and encourage the next cohort of active and engaged citizens.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to learn more about the new activists who became involved in Indivisible chapters between the 2016 and 2020 elections, and understand what they learned through their participation in social action groups and initiatives during a challenging, uncertain time. A secondary purpose of this investigation was to understand how new involvement in social action groups as adults may have led to personal changes in participants. The third purpose was to understand the role that community played in learning or changes so as to develop recommendations from the understanding resulting from the research.

Research Questions

1. What are the factors that participants report have kept them involved with Indivisible's social action efforts? What has sustained or hindered their involvement?

2. What have participants learned through their participation in Indivisible, and any related social action, or civic engagement efforts? What has facilitated or impeded their learning or development?
3. What role did the community of Indivisible play in how participants feel they have changed, or what they have learned, through their involvement and experiences with the organization? What about the community facilitated or impeded their learning and change?

Research Design

This section briefly describes the research design, though this is described and expanded upon in Chapter 3. In order to study learning and sustained involvement in Indivisible after the 2016 elections, study participants were needed. This researcher made the determination to limit participant involvement to new activists who joined Indivisible and stayed involved for a minimum of two years in the 2017-2020 timeframe. Indivisible chapters were involved in voters' rights, democracy initiatives, women's rights, and healthcare, making a natural fit for an organization in which people could theoretically opt in for one or more reasons. To ensure the participants' experiences were fully conceptualized, three methods of data collection were used: demographic surveys with critical incident written responses, interviews, and a focus group.

The Setting

The setting of this study was online and virtual, due to participants residing across the country, as well as COVID-19 challenges. Initial digital outreach started with emails to still-active Indivisible chapters that had published recent social media posts on the Internet or had other activity on their public pages. Anyone who opted in filled out a demographic survey with Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) questions on Qualtrics. This form was provided

electronically to study participants and took approximately 25 minutes to complete. The 55 participants who filled out the survey were also able to opt in and participate in an interview or focus group. The researcher conducted 22 Zoom interviews with participants around the country. In addition to the interviews and CIQs, the researcher held a virtual focus group by Zoom with four Indivisible members in January 2023.

Methodological Design

This case study was developed to understand more about the learning experiences and sustained involvement of new activists who participated in Indivisible groups for at least two years in the 2017-2020 period. The researcher selected demographic surveys with critical incident questionnaire (CIQ) written responses, a focus group, and in-depth interviews in her triangulation efforts. These three research tools were specifically selected so the researcher could hear participants' voices. The researcher believed these three research methods complemented each other, and the CIQs included additional voices of participants who did not want to commit to an interview. The study methodology is presented in detail in Chapter 3.

Assumptions of the Study

The first assumption was there would be enough Indivisible members, new to activism when they joined, who would communicate with an outside researcher without financial or other incentives. The study was focused on people who became involved in Indivisible and continued to be involved with the organization. Because there were many chapters still in existence, the researcher believed this assumption to be valid. Fortunately, this assumption ended up being correct; the researcher was able to source enough participants.

The second assumption was that there would be commonalities in reasons for sustained engagement among newer activists who joined Indivisible chapters from 2017 to 2020. This was

confirmed through an analysis of the responses to the interview questions, CIQ questions, and focus group discussion.

The third assumption was that participant learning occurred through the act of becoming involved in Indivisible groups and social action work. The researcher's assumption that learning, growth, or changes took place through the participants' social action work engagement and Indivisible group involvement was confirmed, as found in Chapter 4.

The fourth and final assumption was that civic engagement and learning will be necessary for the future health of the United States of America. The researcher believed that greater understanding about social action learning and sustained involvement would have the potential to support and encourage future participants and the educators who wish to support them. Confirming a future outcome is not possible; based upon the history of the United States, the researcher believes this has been true and will continue to be true.

The Researcher

The researcher's interest in social action engagement could, in part, be attributed to living in Brooklyn prior to, during, and in the aftermath of the 2016 election of President Trump. The election results came as a surprise to the researcher and her neighbors. Many people expressed a need to do something. The researcher saw people become deeply involved in forms of activism and social action work that was new to them. One example was an acquaintance who took a leave of absence from her job to volunteer full-time against child separation policies, with the goal of family reunification. The researcher saw an opportunity to talk to people who had worked to adjust the country's direction at that time, and she wished to have a greater understanding of who became and stayed involved. The researcher became interested in alternatives to conventionally defined, top-down leadership within the context of a life history seminar taught

by Professor Michel Alhadeff-Jones in 2016. One key takeaway was that leadership could be exercised in anyone's life through their individual decisions and contributions to others. Since then, she was inspired by the work of Brookfield and Preskill (2009) and wanted to learn more about how adult learners may have been developed through involvement in and contributions to Indivisible groups between 2017 and 2020. What was driving these newly involved activists, what were they learning in their new communities, and was their participation leading to individual growth?

The researcher is not and has not been employed by any social action organizations. Prior to this study, the researcher signed up for the Indivisible mailing lists in 2017 and gained a general understanding of some of the organization's efforts. Because the groups also operated independently, the emails from the nationwide Indivisible organization did not capture the dynamics of smaller local groups, or what the experience was like to be a new activist in an Indivisible community during the former Trump administration. Greenberg and Levin (2019) surveyed and interviewed Indivisible chapter leaders. As they were founders of Indivisible, the researcher wanted to learn more about the participants' experiences as someone who had not been a member of the group. The researcher has worked and currently works full-time in higher education administration, focused on a completely unrelated area. Despite the lack of professional experience with the subject area, the researcher was involved in minor ways, such as making donations, signing petitions, contacting elected officials, attending in-person events (e.g., a symposium related to activism), and reading regularly about the subject matter. As an "interested outsider," the researcher had a desire for more knowledge about participant experiences and made efforts to be critically reflective throughout the study. She wanted this research to provide additional information about the learning experiences of participants

involved in Indivisible chapters after the 2016 elections, and to better understand how they stayed involved despite challenges.

In order to actually fight oppression, Freire (1972) argued that one “must emerge from it, and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 52). Social action pursuits have always been a part of adult learning. The researcher was grateful to have the opportunity to learn from the new activists who stepped up from 2017 to 2020.

Rationale and Significance

As noted earlier in the chapter, the Trump administration had adverse impacts for specific groups, in addition to making policies harmful to the environment, relationships with other nations, and public agencies (Glicksman & Camacho, 2020; Goodsell, 2019; Stiglitz, 2018). For practitioners of adult learning and development, knowing more about the learning that resulted after the 2016 elections could aid in educating future participants in social action or pro-democracy civic engagement organizations. Kilgore (1999) wrote that in order to be relevant, “we must understand and become involved with learning communities dealing with societal change” (p. 200). In this timeframe, knowing more about how people stepped up to participate, within the context of the umbrella organization of Indivisible, may be valuable to facilitators of adult education. Adult educators may want to support their students interested in this work but be brand new to the space. Knowing more about the learning and community experiences of new activists may assist in the creation of educational workshops to encourage and further engagement. The study led to recommendations for both new activists and educators, which are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Overview

Chapter 1 introduced the topic and presented the purpose and research questions for this study.

Chapter 2 starts with a rationale for the topic and its parameters, and continues onto three main focus areas. The purpose of this study was to learn more about the sustained involvement, experiences in community, and learning of new activists who joined and participated in Indivisible chapters from 2017 to 2020. There had been limited research focused on the learning of Indivisible members, though there were directly relevant and adjacent studies. For example, Schroeder et al. (2020) conducted a large-scale survey during the Trump presidency to explore transformative learning in online resistance communities. Corrigan-Brown (2021) conducted a relevant study regarding Indivisible coalition strategies in cities with varying degrees of activist history. Gose and Skocpol (2019) extensively studied grassroots resistance groups, including Indivisible, across Pennsylvania and other states, looking at how groups persisted and transformed. Because Indivisible-specific literature was limited, the first literature review section includes selected studies on social action areas from 2017 to 2020 to understand the time period concerns, and research related to sustained action and learning by new activists.

The second section focuses on experiential learning and development, as situated in the world of adult learning. This selection of the literature is followed with more integration in the analysis section. The third section concentrates on social learning and communities of practice, especially as they are related to the experiences of this study.

Rationale for Topics

The development of this topic and the process of conducting the literature review evolved from Fall 2018 to Spring 2022. The researcher determined that some post-Trump administration time and distance would benefit from reflection and analysis. Social action work from 2017 to 2020 was wide-ranging. No singular word or phrase encompassed what participation entailed. Online searches were made using key words such as “activism,” “social action,” “resistance,” and “protest,” along with “Trump.” Initial searches began with “Trump election,” as this research started with the understanding that the election results were disorienting for some. When it became apparent that there were other moments that served as points of outrage or entry along the way (Heaney, 2018, pp. 43-44), “election” was dropped from the researcher’s searches.

The research related to adult learning theory and social action literature spanned farther back to represent a more comprehensive history, and was informed by the researcher’s graduate coursework, syllabi, readings, and faculty at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Search results led to relevant peer-reviewed journals, newspapers, books, magazines, dissertations, non-profit organization reports, and transcripts of radio interviews, including from the databases and archives of: *ProQuest*, *Education Full Text*, *ERIC*, *JSTOR*, *Google Scholar*, and *Business Source Complete*. It was valuable to see who had cited the earlier research studies related to resistance work during the Trump administration. The searches provided relevant information regarding recently completed studies, which helped inform future directions. There are many lenses that could have been used to examine the topic of learning as a new activist. To examine this topic, the researcher looked back at relevant literature, especially related to activism, experiential learning, and social learning, and related the literature to more recent studies that had been completed during the Trump administration. This study was grounded in

the above literature, while being open to new possibilities of learning and ways of sustaining action.

This literature review has three main areas of focus: Social Action and Sustained Social Action Research, Experiential Learning and Development, and Social Learning and Communities of Practice.

Selected Social Action and Sustained Social Action Research

This section of the literature review considers selected research focused on social action efforts and resistance efforts in response to the Trump Administration, along with prior research regarding motivations for sustained action in this context. This study is focused on learning, which differs from some of the cited recent research related to social action topics during the Trump Administration. A synthesis of relevant studies is included in this section, highlighting elements that are pertinent to the study.

As of April 2022, there was limited peer-reviewed research related to learning experiences of participants newly involved in social action initiatives post the 2016 election. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Schroeder et al. (2020) focused on transformative learning in online resistance communities. Their large-scale survey of 1,388 responses offered great background and insight for the creation of this study. In addition to transformative learning, Schroeder et al. used social movement learning theory to ground their study. The study was not focused on new activists but was still relevant, as it focused on learning and resistance communities post-2016. The participants were involved in groups in the May to July 2017 window during the first months of the Trump administration.

Gose and Skocpol (2019), Skocpol et al. (2020), and Frank (2020) also studied activism from 2017 to 2020, including the resistance work of groups of citizen activists. Their work

specific to Indivisible is discussed in this chapter, along with other studies that informed this study. The researcher acknowledges that another researcher's literature review could look different.

The literature within adult education and education journals was not particularly neutral when a situation has been framed as unjust. A prevailing view was that involvement was important and resistance work must be done in order to both change conditions and support potential learners (Andrade, 2017, 2019; Horton, 2003; Michelson, 2020). Notable stances included: the people of Standing Rock deserved clean water over the oil companies' viewpoint that drilling should be done (Roumell, 2018), Latinx students negatively affected by political events should be allowed space to heal (Fernández & Magaña Gamero 2018), and Black/Brown student activists deserved the space to exist on college campuses (and in society) just as much as white people (Logan et al., 2017). A strong overarching view was that equity mattered and should be pursued. This might have seemed radical to someone with siloed information through news or social media. If a researcher studied social action efforts during the 2017-2020 period, they likely thought civic engagement was important for a more just world. Lugg (2017) wrote that public educators must "speak out, as individuals and with our friends, colleagues, and family members, against authoritarianism, unilateralism, and imperialism" (p. 968). People were looking to educators for answers and support; staying 'neutral' was itself a stance.

After the 2016 election, some professors felt called to action, due to changes in the political climate. Cahill and Mould (2018) conducted a narrative case study about the process of creating a college course called "Refusing to Wait: Intellectual and Practical Resources for Troubled Times," in which 22 professors and administrators worked together post-election to "respond quickly and effectively to political developments" (p. 89). This was one example of

college efforts made to support and educate students during a new political landscape, consider their emotional well-being, and develop their critical thinking skills and analyses. The students felt the course helped them increase their aptitude for analyzing arguments, develop sound evidence-based arguments, evaluate media sources, and identify how “social inequities such as sexism and racism are structurally embedded in society” (p. 89).

Morris (2021) conducted a case study with university students in the United Kingdom on how critical reflection could be used in pedagogy to encourage “development of students’ personal, intellectual and political capacities” (p. 1), which is particularly important in turbulent political times. In the Morris case, she discussed an interdisciplinary course for diverse university students focused “on welfare, wellbeing and their interconnections across the life-course, exploring how policy contexts shape lives” (p. 5). Part of this study included encouraging reflective writing. Morris noted that critical reflection had to be incorporated with care, especially because it could lead to uncertainty for the learner, and learners needed time to be able to process their thoughts (pp. 12-13). In this case, it was in the context of Brexit, which had been compared to the election of President Trump (Cassidy, 2016; Curtis, 2020; Langfitt, 2016; Langlois, 2021). A course structure could offer the opportunity to debrief or process an event and its aftermath, as could a workshop within a social action or community group.

The core course organizers in the Cahill and Mould (2018) study were glad they created the course. They acknowledged that it took a tremendous amount of unpaid time and effort; they did not think they would be teaching it again (p. 96). This was relevant for studying social action work post-election: the potential for burnout was real and was mentioned in Logan et al. (2017). In common with the Andrade (2017, 2019) studies, the Cahill and Mould (2018) study was situated within an institution of higher education. This was another example of adult educators

having an access point to assist students who might have needed help to process current events. On a broader scale, the Cahill and Mould study raised the question of how discussion and past coursework may have influenced a person's decision to get involved post-election.

Both Andrade (2017, 2019) studies focused on the needs of undocumented community college students after the 2016 elections and used validation theory and socioemotional development conceptual frameworks. Andrade (2017) used snowballing for sourcing the 18-person sample, and reinforced that regular community college employees (teachers and administrators) had an important role in supporting undocumented students because of the nature of their jobs. Undocumented (adult) students reported that they felt "anger, shock and fear" over Trump's election one year later, and the researcher noted "the emotional intensity was the same or higher" than when Trump was first elected (Andrade, 2019, p. 6). These emotions escalated as President Trump sought to put his campaign promises into action. The students felt educators were trying to help them post-election. However, the educators' continued use of the word "illegal" was triggering to this group of students (Andrade, 2019, p. 4). The undocumented students were looking for more support from educators at the community college; one student expressed interest in educators teaching more about social justice topics (Andrade, 2019, p. 8). The students requested more financial resources and a resource center or safe space for undocumented students to seek help. Administrators and faculty in positions of power in colleges and universities settings could have benefited from the Andrade (2019) study findings as they made programming and center decisions. They had the opportunity to stand up and influence potential policies or initiatives.

Latinx students in the United States had to reconcile to a society in which the President of the United States made racially charged statements (Perry, 2018). Fernández and Magaña

Gamero (2018) showed that Critical Reflexivity Journals (CRJs) in the context of Ethnic Studies courses could “forge sites of resistance in the Trump Era” and that “some institutions of higher education continue to be hostile places for Latinx/Chicanx students” (p. 29). Anzaldúa’s concept of “conocimiento” (which translates to “knowledge” in English) was used to analyze CRJs created within the context of an Ethnic Studies class (Fernández & Magaña Gamero, 2018). The findings from Fernández and Magaña Gamero suggested that college settings could be a good intervention point to help students process events in their lives, become more politically active, and gain important critical thinking skills to help facilitate societal change (p. 29). This study was also relevant because the journals were an example of writing being used to promote critical reflection.

Logan et al. (2017) spoke to Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) college students directly, conducting a qualitative study of 12 Black and Brown student activists during the first 100 days of the Trump presidency. This study was selected because of the focus on activists during the specific time period, the nuance of their self-identification, and their future activism plans. The researchers were interested in analyzing emergent campus climate themes, the possible impact of the campus climate on the students’ activist identities, and how these students were making sense of activism during this time period, both individually and nationally (p. 252). The identities of the participants were not static, and they defined activism on a spectrum. Trump’s election made some students shift how they wanted to be involved in activism. Some students doubled their efforts; others took a step back for self-care (p. 264).

The participants within Logan et al.’s (2017) study were shifting their activism toward immigration issues at the time of the study. One way of staying involved longer term might have involved shifting a person’s focus or activism to an issue that particularly resonated for the

participant. For this Indivisible study, the researcher added an interview question to find out more about how participants would like to be involved in activism going forward. Logan et al. stated, “It is important for future research to determine how the Trump administration may be impacting the activism of other groups” (p. 266). Because of this, it was useful to look at the paths and experiences of people who stayed involved with social action work.

The experiences of college student activists (Logan et al., 2017); undocumented students (Andrade, 2017, 2019), and Latinx students processing the Trump administration (Fernández & Magaña Gamero, 2018) are relevant to thinking about the experiences of the new adult activists in the current study. Reflection and processing the new reality and conditions of the Trump administration were relevant to all the aforementioned participants. All the participants were either affected or deeply worried about people that would be affected due to the changes in political power. These worries were reinforced and became stronger for some as some of the campaign promises were put into reality (Andrade, 2017, 2019). Participants had to consider how they wanted to be involved in activism and make decisions based on how that should shift over a period of involvement, as with Logan et al. (2017). Activists also needed the space and support to further develop critical thinking skills specifically related to increased consciousness, while becoming more politically active. This relates to how Critical Reflexivity Journals (CRJs) were used (Fernández & Magaña Gamero, 2018), or how regular opportunities for dialogue or smaller group newsletters could be used in the context of an Indivisible group. The adult activists did not have a college setting, but instead had some of the same supportive elements within their selected Indivisible communities. This environment offered similar opportunities for writing, shifting their activism efforts, and sharing their fears about new developments around the administration and its plans.

Similar to the Andrade (2017, 2019) studies, the overwhelming negative emotions of the clergy and laity protesters were worth noting. For many of the clergy and laity participants in the Beyerlein and Ryan (2018) study, the election of President Trump was seen as an extremely negative and shocking event. As a result, the participants were looking for a way they could express their disagreement with his initiatives and points of view. Many clergy members became involved in the organizing of social justice groups within their congregations. Congregation Beth Elohim in Brooklyn was a space of organizing beginnings (Action Network website, 2021). Religious viewpoints and morals were reasons for some to stay involved and active.

Research also focused on how activism developed around the United States after the 2016 election. Fisher (2019) found the participant demographics in seven major protest events to be fairly similar. Many included a majority of educated white women averaging around 40 years old (p. 42). Greenberg and Levin (2019) noted that new activists were more likely to be women, college educated, white, and middle-to-upper class (p. 153). Seventy percent of participants at the 2018 Women's March, the March for Our Lives, the March for Racial Justice, and the Families Belong Together events also attended the 2017 Women's March (Fisher, 2019, p. 47). Fisher (2019) conducted important research to understand how certain marches or groups developed and to learn more about the people who showed up for specific days of action. The Fisher timeline ended with the November 2018 midterm elections. Meyer and Tarrow (2018) focused on early resistance efforts called *The Resistance: The Dawn of the Anti-Trump Opposition Movement*, and provided context for how former President Trump was elected in the first place. This book provided a greater understanding of the early efforts of social action participants in response to the Trump presidency, with the Brooker (2018) chapter focusing specifically on Indivisible.

As mentioned, Schroeder et al. (2020) focused on participants in online resistance groups post-2016 election. Schroeder et al. analyzed data from a large online survey that went out to anti-Trump resistance group members in May-July 2017, and received 1,388 responses. The researchers identified themes around joining resistance groups, including “the election of Donald Trump, desire for community, and the urge to take action on specific issues,” with motivations centering on “reactionary, therapeutic, practical, and existential concerns” (p. 126). In terms of specific learning, some participants had deeper understandings about democracy, became more confident to act, and thought of themselves as capable of “making change by standing together” (p. 134). This study inspired the researcher to want to understand more about participants who continued to be involved past 2017.

One study specific to protest events and crowd counting was that of Andrews et al. (2018); Crowd Counting Consortium’s (CCC) monthly crowd data were used with Count Love datasets to approximate the number and size of protests against the Trump administration in the first year. There were approximately 6,434 events that year, with an estimated attendance of 1,981,282; the authors believed those figures were conservative. One reason was that not every protest would necessarily be written about in a newspaper. Andrews et al. identified 11 main categories or reasons for protesting or gathering: race, the economy, immigration, Trump, healthcare, gender and sexuality, the environment, politics, gun control, science, and education (p. 394).

Gose and Skocpol (2019) assessed that resistance effort studies had concentrated on marches, protest events, and national organizations tied to protest activities. They believed it was important to understand the ongoing work of organizational groups and to keep track of groups outside metropolitan areas rather than just focusing on day-long engagements (e.g., a one-off

march) (p. 295). Gose and Skocpol extensively studied Indivisible groups, and noted that the Indivisible chapters registered on the organization's website map were a "mixed bag," with the amount and kind of activities varying greatly (p. 294). Some groups were effective and had more longevity; other groups did not last. Gose and Skocpol identified that there was a gap in past studies, as the thousands of local resistance groups had not been "systematically described or analyzed" (p. 296). Findings included that local group organizers "often acted well before professionally staffed national organizations were in place" (p. 299). Resistance groups were not necessarily following the top-down organization or leader; instead, action and movement were originating from the groups themselves.

The most common reasons Indivisible participants gave for becoming involved were "concern for the wellbeing of the country," "American democracy," and "an individually felt need to take action" (Gose & Skocpol, 2019, p. 300). In terms of possible factors for continued involvement, some Indivisible members reported close friendships, attachment between participants, an appreciation for their community, and learning both about themselves and their world (p. 301). For the people who continued to stay involved, there could have been the element of 'shared history,' as almost all of the "several dozen" groups Gose and Skocpol tracked spent significant efforts in the long fight to keep the Affordable Care Act (p. 308). Healthcare, or lack thereof, had life or death repercussions for family or community members. This work gave group members a common purpose and history. Despite different backgrounds and prior knowledge, healthcare was a common need. Working on something important (and, at times, emotional) might have solidified connections. Participants learned how to organize, how to work with their representatives, and developed media and other skills (p. 308). Gose and Skocpol also identified

that resistance members “learned vital lessons about how to act locally to affect national outcomes” (p. 308).

Gose and Skocpol (2019) specifically considered group persistence, noting that many groups made task forces or subcommittees to keep various initiatives moving forward (p. 309). Many groups had local leadership changes, or the leadership roles evolved, and persistent groups continued to evolve and recruit new members as group compositions and needs changed (p. 309). Leaders could move, leaders could have interests change, and for a group to continue, others had to step up. There was a focus on assigning responsibilities in some groups; having a specific role or ‘job’ might have kept some new activists involved if people were counting on them. Groups had to learn to think ahead and anticipate future needs, especially since elections come up regularly; they had to decide how to prioritize their efforts (p. 310).

Corrigall-Brown (2021) extended earlier work related to resistance efforts and activism, completing a deep dive into 35 Indivisible groups to better understand coalition strategies and movement success. To effectively do this, Corrigall-Brown analyzed Facebook groups systematically for two years and interviewed 25 leaders and activists. The group analysis assisted with understanding the types of activities each chapter engaged in, the kinds and numbers of events they participated in, the issues they concentrated on, the other groups they partnered with, and each group’s ability to last. The context of the location, its history with activism, and the amount of coalition activities that occurred were factors that influenced groups’ survival. While Corrigall-Brown did not specifically study new activists, her study offered one of the best pictures of the variety and diversity of efforts by Indivisible chapters.

Initial reasons for action and continued efforts could be different, and unexpected. This section included some of the most recent articles regarding activism during the Trump

administration, as well as literature related to the varying needs of people affected by the administration. The next section will reference earlier studies that influenced the development of this study.

Downton and Wehr (1998) focused on how 30 peace activists developed and sustained their commitment; from their research they developed a theory of sustained commitment. Twenty of those 30 had been involved in the peace movement for a minimum of five years, while the remaining 10 were split between participants who switched to other activism or left activism entirely (p. 534). In order to better understand the experiences of persistent peace activists, Downton and Wehr conducted in-depth interviews, which allowed them to identify essential social and personal factors that helped sustain commitment (p. 531). Some of these included having an identity related to activism, integrating the work into their regular life, having the work in line with their beliefs, and “feeling bonded to a group, cultivating opportunities for action, sharing a peace vision with other activists, and managing responsibilities, criticism, and burnout” (p. 531).

Downton and Wehr (1998) acknowledged that some factors may have seemed obvious, while others were more obscure; their combination may have produced persistence (p. 534). The authors also attributed creativity in activism as being important for persistence, writing,

They have learned entrepreneurship, to innovate, to do their work with many fewer resources than are available in the conventional world of work. Living ‘life on the edge,’ integrating personal and movement life, devising work-able strategy and tactics for keeping ahead of the opponent, seeing and exploiting a personal opportunity structure—all have required that the persister become an imaginative and inventive person. (p. 545)

This showed the importance of learning, adaptation, and creativity in past activism persistence.

Angelique and Culley (2014) conducted a qualitative study with 31 long-time antinuclear activists in order to understand more about the psychological and sociopolitical factors involved in their participation. The psychological factors of emotional drive, moral/civic duty, and social

solidarity and support were identified through the in-depth interview process (p. 214). Angelique and Culley asserted that there may be two kinds of active citizens, with some motivated by a direct threat, and others who were intrinsically inspired (p. 214). Some new activists were motivated by their children to become active; for others, an event led to their mobilization (p. 214).

Corrigall-Brown (2011) wrote that “social ties may also be created and strengthened in the course of participation once individuals are involved in groups” (p. 84), as interaction and bonds created within movement participation could lead to more engagement over time. In addition, these social ties can be strengthened through “shared participation in cultural practices and group rituals” (p. 85), especially if people feel more emotionally connected, morally committed, and part of the group. Saunders et al. (2012) considered differences in protesters who participate in demonstrations. While past studies suggested that employment, marrying, and having children may have led to less sustained commitment (Corrigall-Brown, 2011; McAdam, 1989), Saunders et al. (2012) wrote that moving away from high-risk activism showed that employment was positively correlated with participation in protest (p. 265).

Driscoll (2020) specifically considered environmental activists’ strategies for persistence in their work in the climate movement, especially because stress could be involved in their participation. Driscoll noted,

Sustaining activism in movement often means dealing with challenges, ranging from personal ones (e.g., health issues, competing family responsibilities), to organizational ones (e.g. cumbersome bureaucracy, interpersonal conflict), to structural ones. (p. 190)

In reviewing the literature and speaking to long-term activists, Driscoll observed that activists practiced self-care, often in nature, focused on what they could control and long-term outcomes, and created life, work, and activism balance by integrating the three (p. 190). Because these activists were focused on environmental activism work for at least 10 years, this was a different

population than the new activists who stayed involved with a more interdisciplinary political group that could have drawn people in for a variety of reasons. The focus on spending time in nature was relevant for people singularly focused on the environment and climate.

Roth (2016) asserted that in order to better understand the paths and “sustainability of activism,” it was valuable to consider the activists as “boundary crossers,” as they participated in different sectors and both paid and unpaid work (p. 33). Instead of focusing on protest events, Roth used personal recollections and knowledge to explain how activism could exist in everyday life through a person’s commitment. Roth also explained that “sustainable activism requires both elasticity and rigor, the ability to learn and compromise as well as the willingness to stick to values and convictions” (p. 49).

This next section focuses on experiential learning, but the researcher notes that experiential learning is an important part of studies mentioned in other sections as well.

Experiential Learning and Development

The second section of the literature review focuses on concepts from the experiential learning and adult development spheres. This section incorporates the work of relevant theorists and practitioners to consider the many ways in which learning by new activists might have taken place. Learning from experience or experiential learning has been selected as a foundational section because participants were learning within the context of their social action work activities. Self-directed learning is relevant as well, as some participants may have realized they had a knowledge-gap and made efforts to learn more to accomplish their activism-goals.

Reflection is relevant when thinking about social action involvement during the 2017-2020 period, because participants indicated that they felt called to act or speak up, even if they previously had not been particularly engaged (Mukhopadhyay & Harding, 2017). Daloz et al.

(1996) discussed how certain life experiences, like cross-cultural experiences, service opportunities, and positive mentoring, can increase “the probability of living a committed life” (p. 17). Freire (1973) developed the concept of conscientization, in which people reflect and ultimately take action within the context of their lives to change their own reality. Lindeman (in Brookfield, 1987) believed in the importance of adults pursuing learning because of a situation in their lives. Horton (2003) also believed learning could only really take place if a person was trying to get answers to a problem; there had to be both the reason and the desire. Critical reflection can lead people to emerge and pursue learning in conjunction with action, realizing that they can be active agents through dialogue with people who were already more involved. Reflection is critical to the learning process in the experiential learning literature. A selected group of theorists and practitioners who have discussed reflection in adult learning is included below.

Schön (1987b) discussed how ‘surprise’ can shake up the usual process of knowing-in-action or tacit knowledge and make the practitioner reflect-in-action in the present, as the person changed, or responded and made adjustments to their actions to adjust for the surprise (p. 28). This was something that regularly came up during the period of the Trump administration, as policy changes and distraction efforts within the 24-hour news cycles forced people involved in resistance efforts to adjust their plans and efforts with little notice. Were new efforts to restrict rights in a different policy area more pressing or important? How should the person involved in social action work continue to pursue their activism goals with the changing dynamics without becoming distracted or derailed? Schön asserted that “our reflection on our past reflection-in-action may indirectly shape our future action” (p. 31). Building upon the work of Schön, Ferguson (2018) conducted a study with social workers in which professionals sometimes felt

they had to limit reflection-in-action in order to protect themselves and complete the task at hand (p. 424). In a charged political climate, reflective practices may not be able to be prioritized when completing a time-sensitive project.

After activists had worked on Indivisible initiatives for a minimum of two years, the different levels of reflection might have led to a kind of learning. Schön's (1987b) ideas were particularly important when thinking about knowledge, too. As Schön described in *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, "knowing-in-action" could be difficult to verbalize (p. 28), but it can be converted to "knowledge-in-action" by describing the way we know in those "spontaneous, routinized moments" (p. 26). Some social action or repeated resistance activities could lead to this kind of knowledge-in-action. One example of this could be knowing what to say or how to be effective during a phone call with an elected representative. Schön (1987a) also explained this predicament that when learning something brand new, "a student cannot at first understand what he needs to learn, can learn it only by educating himself, and can educate himself only by beginning to do what he does not yet understand" (p. 93). This specific period from 2017 to 2020, when adults were learning to become new activists, was an example of learners not yet understanding what they needed to learn until they were active participants.

Duguid et al. (2013) explained that "one of the possible reasons to explain the peripheral place of learning in the field is that most of the learning is tacit" (p. 27), which relates directly to Schön (1987a, 1987b). Duguid et al. (2013) found that many volunteers did not immediately identify having learned through their volunteer activities, but by asking questions related to "changes in knowledge, skills, abilities and values, many volunteers were able to recognize the amount of learning acquired in different areas through their volunteering" (p. 27). This suggests that studies related to social action learning may want to ask participants about learning they are

aware of now, as well as try to create opportunities for reflection that could lead to descriptions of learning or changes not immediately apparent on the surface level.

Feelings and emotions can be an important part of learning. Boud and Walker (1993) expanded upon the work of Dewey (1923) and integrated the role of feelings and emotions in their model for promoting learning from experience. Yorks and Kasl (2002) explained how Boud (2002) understood experience as “the foundation of all learning,” with experience existing as a noun (p. 181). There were seven steps within the Boud, Keough, & Walker (1985) collaboration, which include returning to the experience and determining what was significant, attending to feelings, reevaluating the experience, association, integration, validation, and appropriation (Boud & Walker, 1993, p. 73). With integration, learners combined new and previous learning and experience, and with appropriation, the learners made the experience and learning their own. The theorists’ own process of reflection highlighted “the unpredictable nature of the process of learning from experience,” and through the reflection they had “new ways of viewing [our] own experience” (p. 73).

Boud and Walker (1993) believed learning to be best understood by individual learners, often through a self-reported account. As they further developed their theory, they realized they needed to consider further the “account of learners’ prior experience, and their intent, on what and how they learn” (p. 75). Boud and Walker’s model could potentially be more useful as a way to facilitate learning. Their identification of potential learning barriers could be helpful in thinking about environments that might promote reflection. Adult learners could use Boud and Walker’s steps to manage potential barriers by acknowledging them, naming them, identifying how they work, and then working with them. It would be unrealistic to think that barriers would not exist in the learning process, but Boud and Walker have provided a model that could be used

to better understand how learning from experience happens and can be integrated for a learner. Prior to an experience, it helps for a learner to prepare for said experience, take opportunities for reflection-in-action during the experience, and have a chance for formal reflection afterwards.

Boud, Keogh, & Walker (1985) can be used to ground a case study concerned with learning and reflection, and Chirema (2006) is an excellent example of such a study. While not specific to social action learning, the purpose of this qualitative, purposive case study was to consider how reflective journals could be employed to encourage reflection and learning in adult nursing students (p. 192). The research methods included interviews with participants, as well as reviewing the content of 42 reflective journals. Boud and Walker's (1985) seven steps were used in the coding scheme of the reflective process, along with the work of Mezirow (1990) to identify non-reflectors, reflectors, and critical reflectors (Chirema, 2006, p. 193).

Another example of the use of reflective journals to promote learning was found with Finch et al. (2015). Finch et al. conducted a qualitative case study with 28 Canadian business students to understand more how experiential learning could facilitate emotional engagement and learning. They used an analysis of reflective journals within the context of their senior coursework. Finch et al. found that student-goal orientation was important in terms of "predicting emotional response, regulation, and ultimately, performance within an experiential learning environment" (p. 23). The researchers also found that negative emotions could be triggered through "team-based experiential learning" (p. 23). Interpersonal relationships and working through challenges can lead to tension and conflict in teams as people may have different beliefs on the best path forward. The Finch et al. study found that the "educational value of experiential learning is focused on how students learn to regulate and adapt to negative

emotions” (p. 23). Enhanced abilities to appropriately regulate emotions promote confidence and professional competence (Boud & Walker, 1998).

One reason the new Indivisible activist case study focused on a recent, but retrospective period of 2017 to 2020, was because Boud and Walker (1993) discussed how they could have benefitted from “time to recover emotionally,” in their case, from an intense conference experience (p. 76). The period leading up to the 2020 presidential election was incredibly emotional (Rucker et al., 2020). The researcher believed that distance from the 2020 election was beneficial for participants as they were asked to reflect upon their experiences during the 2017-2020 period. At the same time, Boud and Walker (1993) noted that after an experience, “barriers can raise emotional factors which made reflection impossible or limit it” (p. 80), and a researcher must be cognizant of how either internal or external barriers could affect what the participant may identify as learning. Boud and Walker explained that “self-imposed censorship” could be an issue in the process of reflection and learning from experience (p. 80). In this study, it was important to think about the participants’ comfort level to minimize this self-imposed censorship, as participants reflected about their experiences.

Brookfield’s and Preskill’s (2009) book, *Learning as a Way of Leading: Lessons from the Struggle for Social Justice*, was foundational in thinking about learning and personal development during the Trump administration. Brookfield and Preskill identified the importance of leaders who prioritized and centered learning within their work. They asserted that leadership could be practiced by any person, writing that it was “a relational and collective process in which collaboration and shared understanding are deemed axiomatic to getting things done,” with forming and sustaining relationships also identified as being important (pp. 3-4). Within their conception of leadership, leadership could be facilitative and change-oriented, with “learning

leaders” being able to show their commitment through listening, observing, and reading critically (p. 5). Horton (2003) also gave credence to the power of listening and thought that answers often came from the people themselves (p. xvii). Brookfield and Preskill (2009) believed leadership should not just be focused on the self, but instead support the learning of others (p. 6), and that everyone should be able to take on the role of a leader at times (p. 7). Previously, both Dreamer and Black Lives Matter (BLM) activism have shown how everyday people can develop, become leaders, and share their voices without first having titles bestowed upon them by a hierarchical group (Milkman, 2017, p. 17).

In thinking about personal development and learning for social change, Brookfield and Preskill (2009) wrote that “transforming leadership produces a climate in which followers are constantly becoming leaders by virtue of the ideas they put forward, the actions they take, and the learning they engage in” (p. 7). Horton (2003) believed that education for social change was not a top-down effort, but instead was done in conjunction with students; learning between students and leaders had to be done together (p. xxi). Indivisible members could guide the direction of their chapters, which meant that even new activists had the potential to put on a ‘leadership hat’ at times. Brookfield and Preskill (2009) identified nine learning tasks: “learning how to be open to the contributions of others,” “learning how to critically reflect on one’s practice,” “learning how to support the growth of others,” “learning how to develop collective leadership,” “learning how to analyze experience,” “learning how to question oneself and others,” “learning democracy,” “learning to sustain hope in the face of struggle,” and “learning to create community” (pp. 15-18). Within their book, Brookfield and Preskill discussed social justice leaders who exemplified these specific learning tasks. Many of these learning tasks could

be considered by other researchers of new participants in social action initiatives as experiential learning categories, or ways adults could have personally developed through participation.

Expanding upon one of the learning lessons, in earlier writings, Brookfield (1995) had an important point of view regarding the importance and purpose of critical reflection. Brookfield (1995) was interested in the three connected processes in which “adults question and then replace or reframe an assumption up to that point [that] has been uncritically accepted as representing common sense wisdom,” the process in which they could take “alternative perspectives” on ideas they had previously accepted as “taken for granted,” and third, the process where they could identify the “hegemonic aspects of dominant cultural values” (Brown & Shaked, 2018, p. 34). Brookfield (1987a) explained how a primary purpose of advocating for critical thinking was that it could help adult learners “feel a sense of personal connection to wider happenings” (p. 53). For some new activists, it was possible President Trump’s election led to their questioning, and then replacing, previously held assumptions. Brookfield (1987a) was not interested in critical reflection for just personal changes in one’s own life. Instead, he was interested in how the person reckoned with previously held ideas when they realized how power and societal dimensions affected what they had, until then, held as fact. It was through the process of critical reflection that a person may expand their perspective, which ultimately could cause them to have different ways of being or acting in the world.

Brookfield (1987a) said that “being a critical thinker is part of what it means to be a developing person, and fostering critical thinking is crucial to creating and maintaining a healthy democracy” (p. 1). This emphasis on the importance of critical thinking for the health of democracy, as well as for personal growth and development, was an important part of the construction of this case study. It relates to the second research question of how participants

described any learning or self-reported changes that took place because of their involvement in social action work. Brookfield (1987a) noted that critical thinking was a “process, not an outcome,” and it could be brought on by negative, as well as positive occurrences (p. 6). Horton (2003) also saw learning as a process. Another important part of critical thinking in Brookfield’s (1987a) construction was that it was both emotive and rational (p. 7). It was okay to be fearful, to have anxiety, to feel confused, to be resentful, etc. within the critical thinking process or journey (p. 7).

Learning Communities and Social Learning

Schön (1987b) described how professionals exist in a context of meaning-making with other professionals to form a community of practitioners. The community of professionals can reflect on what constitutes the bounds, values, and norms of their profession (Schön, 1987b). Many people formally employed by non-profits or advocacy groups sought to stop some of the Trump administration actions. New activists were likely not as knowledgeable about best practices of social action work. They were new activists joining a brand-new organization, which then had the potential to create a community of meaning-making.

Wenger (2009) identified that communities of practice may be found everywhere (p. 4), and Indivisible groups may be considered communities of practice. Within a community of practice, collective learning happens when a group of community members is working on a common pursuit over a period of time (Wenger, 2000). Communities of practice include shared resources, regular interactions, and community members’ shared understanding and accountability around “what their community is about” (p. 229). This relates directly to Indivisible, as group members had shared understandings about the purpose of their community, and they regularly interacted with each other and developed norms. They also developed

relationships of “mutuality” reflecting these interactions (p. 229) and had communal resources, including tools and routines. Wenger (2009) also presented steps for an organization to “Build a Strategic Capability Framework” (p. 7). For this study, the most relevant steps were: “Develop Communities,” “Connect Across Boundaries,” “Foster Belonging,” “Run the Business,” and “Apply, Assess, Reflect, and Renew—Build Momentum” (p. 17). This maps to the study, because activists had to develop communities—as every Indivisible chapter was new. They had to connect with each other despite differences and create belonging for all of the members, even though they had different focuses. In terms of “running the business,” they had to operate as a social action group and figure out ways to be effective with their activism goals. The participants were involved over time and had to reflect about what was working and what they might change, in addition to building momentum around elections.

In thinking about learning in social movements, Kilgore (1999) developed a relevant theory of collective learning that included both the individual as well as the group. The individual components she considered included “identity, consciousness, sense of agency, sense of worthiness and sense of connectedness” (p. 96). The interplay between the individual and the group, and the group as being composed of individuals, was all important. The person choosing to intentionally act could then see themselves as someone capable of agency, who could make positive contributions to the group or society, and who could work well with others in a community (p. 97). Kilgore wrote that “a vision of social justice and the means to achieve it are primary components of learning in a social movement” (p. 200).

Bandura (2001) defined three modes of agency: person, proxy, and collective. The second two are likely the most relevant to the learning that could have taken place in a community due to social action involvement. Proxy agency was described as the ability to work

with others who have resources, skills, and/or access that could be used to support a person's own wants or needs. They could have had ideas for what needed to be done, but not have had all of the skills or access to make their goals a reality. The ability to work with others with complementary backgrounds was likely important for a person first opting into learning about resistance work. Employing that ability to work with others may have brought the person closer to meeting their own wants or desires. Directly related to this was the third mode: collective agency. A person who opted into activism work might have been exercising their ability to collaborate with other more knowledgeable participants online or in group meetings. Bandura (2001) noted that a key part of collective agency was people's "shared belief in their collective power" (p. 14), and the dynamics of their interactions and transactions were very important to group attainments. The collective and shared belief in abilities and potential of the group was of importance. If a person did not think they would have power within a collective, it seemed they would be less likely to take a step into the unknown by joining a group as a new activist.

Using Bandura (1986) in their theoretical background, Moss et al. (2021) wrote that leaders who "display desired behaviors will serve as role models for followers, increasing their desire to emulate those leaders" (p. 2). For the Moss et al. study, the researchers were specifically considering the potential relationship between how people felt about President Trump, along with their decisions regarding COVID-19 protection behaviors. The researchers used 17 national datasets with 26,776 participants and found that participants who approved of President Trump were less likely to engage in personal protective behavior (e.g., wearing a mask, handwashing, and social distancing) (p. 10). This could have had positive or negative outcomes depending on the kind of leadership, and the related decision making. In this case, with the COVID-19 pandemic, there were unfortunately dire health outcomes. This linkage in wanting to

follow specific leaders or leadership behavior, however, was relevant in thinking about the reasons participants had for staying involved in Indivisible (e.g., modeling inspirational leaders), as well as what they could have learned.

Stowe (2013) studied adults who participated in volunteer work in Canada and their kinds of learning. For the people who indicated they engaged in informal learning, 59% reported that they learned problem-solving and teamwork, while 56% reported learning interpersonal skills (p. 55). Volunteers also said they learned about health, social, political, and environmental issues. Others learned managerial skills, about new equipment, computers, or financial management (p. 55). While this study was not specific to the same population that the researcher studied in the United States, the new activists were all volunteering their time and could report this kind of informal learning.

Daloz et al. (1996) found that dialogue with others was important for meaning-making. The more than 100 people they interviewed who had sustained involvement in pursuing lives or work dedicated toward the common good were able to “hold steady in the face of complexity because they had learned to balance the dialogue between self and other well,” and they were not threatened by environments where opinions varied and dialogue was free (p. 109). Daloz et al. explained how being comfortable with dialogue with others allowed for interpersonal perspective-taking to start to understand how the world might seem for another person (p. 111). This tied into the value that being a part of an organization or community would offer; instead of a person operating in a silo, they would have the opportunity to talk about current issues, and start to experiment with perspective-taking. Daloz et al. were specifically looking at people who were involved in a dedicated way over time. Some of the elements discussed by participants included growing up in a loving home, having a parent who pursued efforts for the public good,

service opportunities during teenage years, mentoring experience, or cross-cultural experiences. Daloz et al. wrote, “We have become persuaded that the greater the number and depth of certain key experiences one has, the greater the probability of living a committed life” (p. 17). Daloz et al. referenced empathy and compassion, and how having a capacity for both might call someone to sustained action (p. 69).

Many participants had had an encounter with “otherness” in which “the encounter challenged some earlier boundary and opened the way to a larger sense of self and the world” (Daloz et al., 1996) pp. 65-66). This was not simply an encounter, but the participants had “come to feel a connection with the other” (p. 67), which led to an “empathetic recomposing of we and they” and the person being able to make a commitment to the common good in solidarity with what had previously been the ‘other’ (p. 68). Compassion itself was a reason for commitment, but it begged the question of where a new activist’s compassion may come from, and an experience earlier in life might have been the genesis for it in present adulthood. Daloz et al. wrote that “community of confirmation matters greatly in sustaining commitment” (p. 106), and this affirmation may have been a way of both sustaining action, as well as finding personal meaning, in what can be challenging circumstances. While their participants could be overwhelmed by challenges, Daloz et al. found that they showed specific habits of mind that assisted them in persevering, which included the habit of dialogue, the habit of interpersonal perspective-taking, the habit of critical, systemic thought, the habit of dialectical thought, and the habit of holistic thought (p. 108). Through interviews and storytelling by the participants, Daloz et al. were able to see how these habits were integrated into the lives of the people who were deeply committed in pursuing the social good. Being involved in this work over time meant that

participants had to be comfortable with complexity, contradictions, and look at the interconnections in life.

Ollis's (2012) book titled, *A Critical Pedagogy of Embodied Education: Learning to Become an Activist*, developed out of her personal interest in "accidental activists" and her desire to learn more about activism not specifically tied to social movements. As this case study is focused on social action participants who are linked to a robust social movement, not everything in the book was relevant to this topic. Despite this, there are some key points that have informed this research, especially in terms of methodology, informal learning, and because some participants might identify as accidental activists. Ollis distinguished between activists with a lifelong dedication to activism and people who "come to activism due to a series of life events" (p. 2), then explored the embodied learning of how these newer participants learned to become activists essentially on the job, and how their learning was different than previously involved activist peers (p. 6). There were certainly members of Indivisible chapters with extensive activism experience prior to the 2016 elections; this study is focused on the newer activists. Ollis found that the learning of newer accidental activists was "often driven by emotional agency, is social, informal, and critically cognitive," and also used critical pedagogy as a lens (p. 2).

It is important to note Ollis (2012) approached the subject matter from the position as a lifelong activist, and she believed "activism that is informed by even the smallest acts of resistance in the everyday work of community workers is just as significant and important as the mass mobilization of thousands of people in direct protest" (p. 5). A connection to this could be the activism that higher education professionals could have engaged in with undocumented students by validating their experiences and supporting them (Andrade, 2017). Ollis (2012) conducted in-depth interviews with 17 activists using purposive sampling (p. 27), and her study

looks at how activists came to activism and the knowledge they acquired through their involvement with activism (p. 13). Ollis noted, “There is some indication that religion has a role to play in whether or not individuals are more likely to become activists” (p. 14), which could be related to reasons for staying involved as well, especially if there was a link with others in a faith community. Ollis used both Freire (1972) and Brookfield (1987) to ground her research, in addition to philosophers like Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Bourdieu (1977). Ollis’s (2012) focus on earlier experiences was similar to Daloz et al.’s (1996) in-depth interviews about prior life experiences that could have been influential in living a life of service. These life experiences could have happened in home communities, faith communities, or specific incidents that helped to shape a person’s life.

The ideas of peer learning, community, or having the opportunity to learn from other people actively involved in social action work are relevant to this study. Ollis (2012) was particularly interested in how learning could be embodied, writing, “This learning can be embedded in significant identity change as they learn to be and become activists.... Activists learn from one another on the job of activism” (p. 11). Ollis operationalized and extended Lave and Wenger’s (Lave, 1991) theory of situated learning and had previously shown that similar learning can take place “in the unpaid work of activists” (Ollis, 2008, p. 198). Similar to Greenberg and Levin (2019) talking about a change post-election, Ollis (2012) wrote that “activists’ emancipation is entwined with a perception of a shift in the self. There is a sense of fate, a sense of purpose; indeed, there is a sense of agency associated with their activism” (p. 45). Because of this, the researcher added “purpose,” and “change in identity” to her coding list. Ollis explained the importance of activism as connected to communities, as well as discussed how activists could learn new skills through their decisions to participate with others on social

change-oriented projects (p. 46), and over time “activists become more expert at what they do” (p. 48). For activists who become involved in this work for longer periods of time, “feelings of mastery” may be something that could develop.

In her study, Ollis (2012) focused on the ‘activist’ identity. She found that emotions could play a role “in giving the circumstantial activists impetus to act and also maintain their commitment to activism over the longer term,” with her study participants mentioning “passion, anger, rage, and frustration as contributing to their motivation to act” (p. 131). Boud and Walker (1993) also mentioned the emotional component in the process of reflection and learning, and emotion could have been part of the process from beginning (choosing to be involved) to end (the action, and the period of reflection and learning). Emotion is not necessarily something that can be picked up in a large-scale survey. A fully adopted new identity could be a reason that someone was involved over time—if someone identified as an activist, it makes sense that they would continue to participate in activist work. The participants’ interactions and relationships with other more experienced activists could also affect their own identity development.

Ollis (2012) specifically addressed “the learning edge” and explained how many activists had periods of “tension” or “anxiety” through their involvement. The study participants used language like “learning curve,” “out of my comfort zone,” or “on a huge journey” frequently (p. 132). These phrases informed the initial study codes, but only “out of my comfort zone” ended up being relevant. Ollis found that “circumstantial activists undergo a significant and rapid process of learning and identity formation over a short period of time” (p. 134). Her sample size was relatively small and was not linked to a specific social movement like the period post-2016 election. Ollis found circumstantial activists to be “rapid learners” who developed knowledge “at an extraordinary pace” (p. 134).

In addition to learning quickly about systems and structures, Ollis (2012) found that activists developed “knowledge and skills in critical thinking,” with emotions continuing to motivate them over time (p. 160). Some of the learning that took place within the context of the Ollis study included the development of “communicative and social skills” (p. 160), as well as the development of empathy (p. 163), with these findings also informing the preliminary code list. Ollis found that, in conjunction with the emotional connection to an issue, activists had to feel change was possible (p. 175). She also made the strong assertion that “activists have agency and purpose—they cannot observe inequality and not be moved by it” (p. 179).

Costa et al. (2021) also grounded their study with the work of Ollis (2010, 2012); their qualitative study focused on the “Activist Craft” and learning processes of 12 professional activists based in Portugal (p. 211). This current study focused on activists who did it for a living. The applicable takeaway was how these activists learned to do their work. Costa et al. (2021) were specifically interested in “the processes through which this craft is learned, as well as its learning outcomes” (p. 212). The authors explained how there could be an emotional component in both the motivating factors for becoming involved, as well as the learning process involving “mind-body-emotion” (p. 214). All of the activists in the Costa et al. study thought that learning was happening through their professional experience in their

real life/work contexts, by seeing other activists at work, and through their professional involvement in concrete activist experiences. Working outside the office, doing outreach work, interacting with people in situations of vulnerability and knowing their life stories, was extremely relevant to most participants for their politicization and professional activism learning. (p. 219)

In the Costa et al. study, the activists also had the opportunity for emotional connection with both their fellow activists, as well as the vulnerable people they were serving. The three main things they learned through their work were “critical, social and political consciousness,” a “sense of (in)justice and empathy” and “know-how to speak out” (p. 226).

Brookfield (1987) noted that individually people could feel immobilized, as going up against strong “social forces” can be overwhelming. Through collective action, it was possible for people to not feel alone (p. 61). Individuals realized they were relatively powerless on their own; when they associated within “the context of a political movement or pressure group,” there was more potential power (p. 52). Still others were not activated by realizing how they might be able to fit into a larger movement, and instead retreated to the sphere of their personal relationships (p. 54).

In terms of modern application of Dewey (1923), Roumell (2018) considered the specific case study of learning with the No Dakota Access Pipeline (NoDAPL) movement at Standing Rock. The author identified collective learning as an important part of community development. Roumell brought in Dewey’s educational philosophies around experiential learning as a foundation for showing how “grassroots community education serves the purpose of improving an individual’s ability to engage their world” (p. 51), with most of the participants’ time spent “in prayer ceremonies and open meetings” (p. 53). Indigenous understandings of the importance of the environment “framed the experiences and learning at Standing Rock” (p. 54). In this case, the location and context were of utmost importance for the activism work and learning that took place. At Standing Rock, “the water protectors locked themselves to construction equipment to stop an oil pipeline being drilled underneath their water source” (Jaffe, 2017, p. 193). The people at the oil company did want their personal water to be affected by a pipeline; they decided to do it in an area that would instead affect Native American people.

Within the Standing Rock case, traditional ways of communication were used (e.g., incorporating the drum or circle), but members of the group also communicated and worked with external groups and interested parties from outside the area (Roumell, 2018). The author offered

a strong argument for how Dewey's philosophical lens for education was relevant to the learning that took place at Standing Rock, and also related and overlapped with some of the principles of "indigenous educational activism" (p. 54). Dewey's interest in the scientific method and pragmatism diverged from the Lakotas' traditional values, but Dewey's work could be overlaid with local knowledge for a richer understanding of learning that took place at a specific time and place (Roumell, 2018). Roumell explained how difficult events could "engender experience-based learning in action aimed at educating and mobilizing the broader public about community-relevant problems that must be negotiated and solved collectively" (p. 54). The 'difficult event' of the Trump administration's rising power led to the Indivisible organization's challenge of educating the general public about their elected officials, and the degree to which citizens were being represented. This suggests that the principles promoted by Dewey (1923) may provide a lens to look at other community-based collective learning that may take place during challenging, time-sensitive local events. Dewey remains relevant, especially since social action work is often situated within a community, organization, or topic (Brown & Shaked, 2018). Continuity and interaction are important for learning from experience. The interaction between the individual and the community environment may have led to learning from experience (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 163).

Freire (1993) noted that "problem-posing education does not and cannot serve the interests of the oppressor" (p. 93), as the oppressor does not want the masses to be involved in creating a society that benefits everyone, because the oppressors want to retain their position at the top. In problem-posing education, people "develop their powers to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 1972, p. 77). In the

2017-2020 period, problems could have been posed through various forms of media, like Facebook and Twitter (now known as “X”), discussion or organizing groups, family members, church groups, or organizations like Indivisible. Freire believed in praxis, so that action and reflection could be used in order to change and improve conditions (Owen, 2016, p. 39). Praxis allows the individual, with their own sense of reality and possibilities, to be connected to a larger community with more possibilities (Brown & Shaked, 2018, p. 40). Within social action involvement, a person’s community could be defined differently depending on how the participant identifies: Are they part of a smaller group that makes decisions based on the messaging from a larger umbrella organization? Is the group an offshoot of their church or community center? Is it a network dedicated to functioning locally?

Brown and Shaked (2018) explained that Freire was interested in “a social transformation, a demythologizing of reality and an awakening of critical consciousness whereby people perceive the social, political, and economic contradictions of their time and take action against the oppressive elements” (p. 35). This emphasis on community and society over a personal experience is another reason his work has been selected to ground this study. Daloz et al. (1996) explained the idea of “interbeing,” as we have to also be with every other living thing, as everything on earth is interdependent (p. 25). The study spoke to individuals within the context of a group they have participated in; if there was a process of “waking up,” it would not have necessarily happened in their own private space. It is possible there were earlier roots of a person’s ‘conscientization,’ and learning more about those potential entry points would be of importance to adult educators seeking access points.

For another contemporary example in the education and learning realm, Farago et al. (2018) used Freire’s ideas of critical consciousness and praxis to look at how activism has a role

in enriching student experiences, such as the site of a Local to Global Justice (LTGJ) forum and festival. In a study of 40, participants indicated that participating in the LTGJ forum and festival enhanced their educational experiences (p. 160), gave them an opportunity to increase their critical thinking skills (p. 161), offered them the chance for applied learning (p. 161), and also contributed toward their career and professional development (p. 162). The involvement itself fostered critical consciousness and offered the opportunity for praxis (p. 167). This research suggests that the act of becoming involved in a specific forum or project can lead to meaningful dialogue and engagement with other interested parties. This can help foster learning, personal growth, and social change.

Marshall Ganz, Harvard professor and former Director of Organizing for the United Farm Workers (UFW), used the UFW organizing experience as a case study to explore leadership, organization, and strategy within a movement in his 2009 book, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*. The United Farm Workers were first known as the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) before the UFW name came to be. While the word “learning” is not mentioned in the title, Indivisible participants were involved in strategizing, and Ganz (2009) explained that the UFW was able to succeed because “the motivation of its leaders was greater than that of their rivals; they had better access to salient knowledge; and their deliberations became venues for learning” (p. 6). His organizing and activism experience, coupled with his years as a professor immersed in higher education and teaming, create a valuable foundation for understanding what learning can look like in an activist community space.

Ganz (2009) described strategy as something that is “intentional,” in which a path is forged through a series of decisions toward a future goal, with strategy requiring “the courage to

venture into the unknown, risk failure ... and commit to a course of action that we can only hypothesize will yield the desired outcome” (p. 9). Ganz noted that having the courage to “venture into the unknown” (p. 9) might foreshadow the beginning of a situation in which learning can take place; if a participant is willing to take on a risk and put themselves into an unknown situation, that might be an opportunity for growth. Another element that Ganz emphasized was power, as he identified the importance of mobilizing others and deploying “political, economic, or cultural resources” to sway or affect people that control needed resources (p. 9). Indivisible groups are able to organize locally and employ coalition strategies to try to enact change (Nvanevu, 2018). If people use their resources individually, they do not have power; through collective mobilization, the larger organization or company with power is forced to listen to the interests of the collective or group (Ganz, 2009, p. 9). Between 2017 and 2020, one person might have felt powerless. Ganz connected with Leah Greenberg and Ezra Levin as they developed Indivisible initiatives, to provide both guidance and historical background (Greenberg & Levin, 2019, p. 75). This was yet another reason his work was relevant to this study: his theoretical and practical work helped influence the development of the organization itself.

In thinking about strategy, Ganz (2009) identified the three most important elements of “targeting, tactics, and timing” (p. 16), which involve an “ongoing interactive process of experimentation, learning, and adaptation, we strategize as we act” (p. 18). This relates to Schön (1987b) and the idea of adjusting in real time. With Ganz’s (2009) example, this is a community activity. Within Ganz’s worldview, there is not a book or social action training that could prepare someone for all situations. It is instead the action, the trying things out, adjusting and making changes that enable the person to progress with their social action efforts. Activists learn ‘on the

job' about what might work in certain environments or situations. Timing is a critical part of social action efforts, both to decide what would work in a certain context or environment, and to consider when to use available resources. The potential for learning is likely ongoing, even for people with significant resistance work experience. Ganz noted that people must be able to recognize "the problem is a new one, at least to us, and thus requires a new solution" (p. 10). Creative thinkers find ways to turn the problem around and reconsider it from other angles—to "recontextualize" it" (p. 10). It would be helpful to know what problem solving looks like from the people on the ground.

Within a social movement context, Ganz (2009) wrote that "we often can't get the information we need to make good strategic choices until we begin to act" (p. 17). This relates directly to Freire's (1993) point of view regarding praxis. Even if someone had previously been engaged in social action work, it seems from Ganz's (2009) perspective, it takes acting in a specific situation to start adjusting and to make efforts toward positive outcomes within a given challenge. Ganz offered many tactics that could be used, noting that each one has "limited influence" (p. 7). It seems to take the combination of experience, adequate strategic tools, and a community of other participants working together to attain successful gains. Ganz discussed creativity, writing that researchers have found that "motivation enhances creativity by inspiring concentration, enthusiasm, risk taking, persistence and learning. We think more critically when intensely interested in a problem ... and when we have small successes, they can enhance our creativity, in part because they generate greater motivation" (p. 9). Ganz's ideas were included in the initial list of codes related to how participants could have stayed interested and committed together.

Because participants in social action work could have come from many different professional backgrounds, they likely had access to many different kinds of knowledge. Ganz (2009) described the importance of both a “craftsperson’s relevant knowledge and skill,” their access to tactical skills, and knowledge to have more “access to salient knowledge than their rivals” (p. 10). Just as UFW leaders had access to people in multiple parts of society and the community, it is valuable to know what kind of backgrounds and knowledge areas participants brought to their particular social action groups, and if they felt these areas were tapped into during their periods of engagement. Ganz was a proponent of having team members with varied life experiences, identities, background, and knowledge. He believed this diversity of prior experience and points of view could help make problem-solving more “innovative” (p. 17). This idea coupled well with the Ollis et al. (1996) finding that the most common pattern in “people committed to the common good” is “a constructive, enlarging engagement with the other” (p. 63). Many of the people committed to the common good had had meaningful encounters with individuals notably different from themselves (Ollis et al., 1996, p. 63). This last section considered the ways that experiential learning theorists and practitioners provided direction for the construction of the study, both in theory and practice. The role of community for both sustained involvement and learning, the importance of reflection for learning, and the influence of emotions in the work itself are all core ideas that guided the construction of the study.

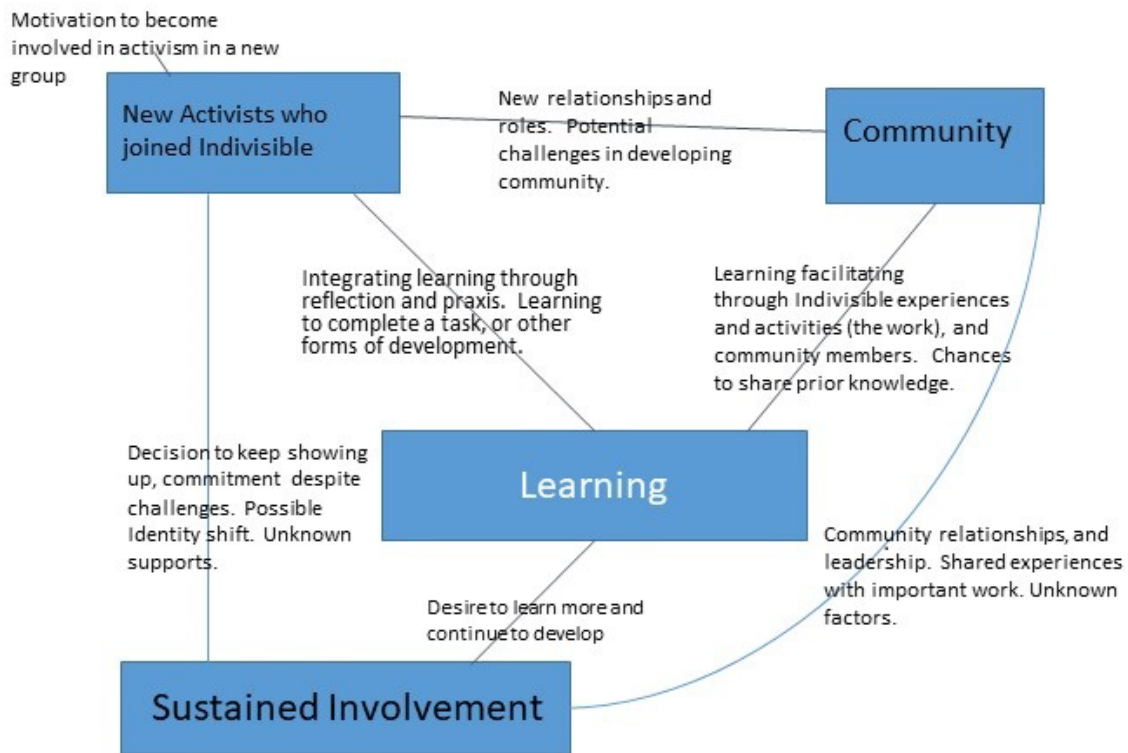
Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is a model that incorporates ideas and concepts identified within the process of developing the literature review. The conceptual framework incorporates some ways in which learning from experience has existed in other scenarios, while also weaving in themes related to the study. This conceptual framework shows the areas in which much was

unknown, such as the new activist participants' learning or self-reported changes as attributed to their Indivisible involvement. There were other areas where pertinent research had been conducted, especially in ways that participants in other social action work had stayed involved, but learning more about the experiences of new activists involved from 2017-2020 had the potential to yield different or additional responses. Corrigan-Brown (2021), Fisher (2019), Greenberg and Levin (2019), and Skocpol and Tervo (2020) identified motivations for becoming involved in resistance work during the studied window. When developing the study, the researcher thought that community interactions, emotional engagement, and relationships with leadership were potentially relevant to the participants' experiences of being involved. The researcher was interested in understanding more about the learning or changes for this new population. As the researcher learned more from data collection and analysis, this initial conceptual framework was updated to incorporate new learnings. The emergent process-oriented integrative framework may be found in Chapter 6. The updated version represents the researcher's current understanding about the experiences of becoming involved as a new activist.

The researcher thought that the initial conceptual framework below was important to include. It assisted in the development of the study interview questions and the identification of suitable data collection methods for the study. These will follow in Chapter 3, the Methodology chapter.

Figure 1. Original Conceptual Framework



Chapter Summary

This case study focused on the sustained involvement and learning experiences of new activists who were involved in social action work in Indivisible chapters for at least two years between 2017 and 2020. There were commonalities between social action work in the 1960s and today (e.g., marches, protests, and boycotts), but during the Trump administration, the flood of media updates was overwhelming and seemingly endless through constant media updates. Pollitt (2017) asserted that “no one is safe from the transition this country is undergoing. While many of us have faced hate, ignorance, and greed in our daily lives, the period that we have entered is unlike anything that any of us have seen before” (p. 229). As an organization, Indivisible replicated some lessons and ‘best practices’ of the Tea Party, while losing the hateful ideology

(Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Roth, 2018). We are continuing to learn more about what that experience looked like and felt like for new adult activists. This chapter reviewed research focused on social action efforts during the Trump administration, experiential learning, social learning, and communities of practice. Social action literature and experiential learning literature bodies offer perspectives about the role of reflection, emotions, and learning in community.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand more about the factors that led to sustained involvement for new activists in Indivisible post-2016, what participants learned through involvement, and the role of community in their learning or development. This methodology chapter provides additional details about how the case study has been constructed to address the research questions. Information about the research design, procedures, the study sample, confidentiality, and validity is described in greater detail in the following subsections. Chirema (2006) explained how a case study “offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomena” (p. 193), which in this case involved focusing on the experiences and learning involved in becoming a new activist.

Maxwell (2013) defined qualitative research as

research that is intended to help you better understand (1) The meanings and perspectives of the people you study... (2) How these perspectives are shaped by, and shape, their physical, social, and cultural contexts; and (3) The specific processes that are involved in maintaining or altering these phenomena and relationships. (p. viii)

While components of qualitative research can be defined in different ways, this definition was selected in order to identify the best methods for this specific study. The researcher was interested in learning more about the new activists’ learning and their thoughts on their learning, as well as the dynamics that led to their own continued involvement. Hearing from participants in their own words was important to learn more about the significance new activists placed on

different events or activities and their reflections about the experiences. This would not have been captured in the same way with a quantitative multiple choice study.

Ollis (2012) wrote that “the case study method has been used for the purpose of providing rich data about individual activist’s learning” (p. 25). Ollis (2012) selected semi-structured, in-depth interviews as one method to obtain “rich data” (p. 30). One of the goals of this Indivisible new activist study was to acquire a greater understanding, through their reports, of what the participants experienced. Seidman (2019) wrote, “At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience,” because their stories “are of worth” (p. 9). The researcher agrees with this perspective. Because the case study method has been used to learn more about activist learning in the past, and because the researcher has similar interest areas as Ollis (2012), the case study approach and the method of semi-structured in-depth interviews were selected.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the development of this case study was initially influenced by the leadership profiles within Brookfield and Preskill (2009)’s *Learning as a Way of Leading: Lessons from the Struggle for Social Justice*. The kinds of learning identified in Brookfield and Preskill would not necessarily be captured by a survey, but examples could be described, analyzed, and interpreted in a more in-depth discussion. This chapter provides additional information about the three data collection methods, the rationale for their selection, and the methods for data collection and analysis.

Methodological Design Overview

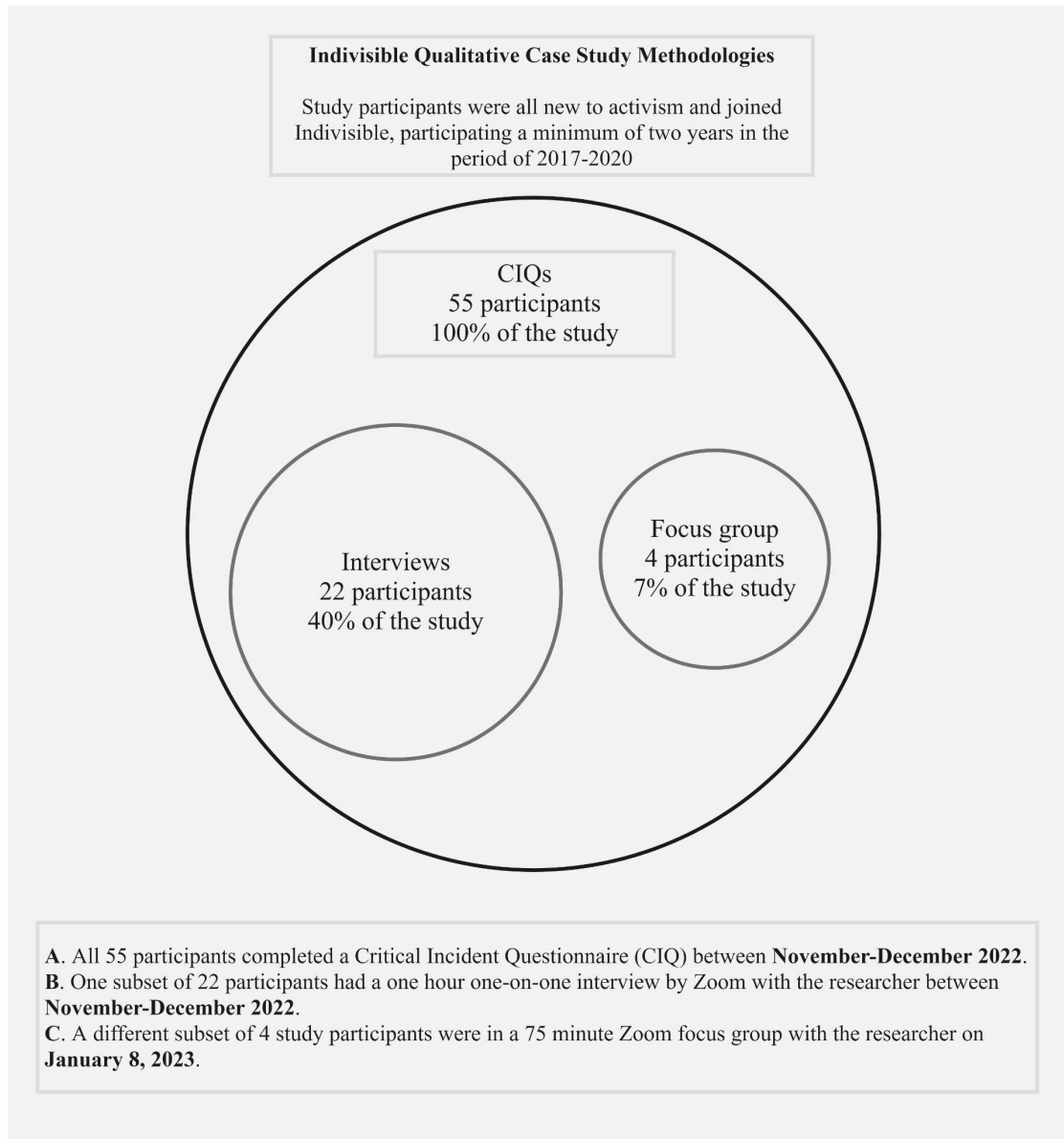
The research methods included a demographic survey with the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ), in-depth interviews, and a focus group. These three methods were selected for deeper understanding and triangulation purposes. These complementary methods allowed

variation to hearing from participants in their own voices. The 55 total participants initially answered questions directly by reflecting in a written CIQ. This was followed by a subset of 22 participants interacting one-on-one with the researcher during the interview. Finally, a different subset of four participants answered questions by speaking in community during the focus group.

The proposal hearing for this study occurred on June 1, 2022, and Teachers College's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study on July 7, 2022. Starting in October 2022, potential participants were first sent approved study information (Appendix A), and then a short demographic survey with the CIQ research questions (Appendix F). If participants submitted the demographic survey with the CIQ research questions, they then had the opportunity to continue to participate in either an individual interview or a focus group, or they could end their participation after the demographic survey with the CIQ. The three methods allowed the researcher to understand more about their experiences of staying involved in Indivisible chapters during the 2017-2020 window.

Both the demographic survey with the CIQ questions and the interview questions were designed to provide a solid knowledge base of the kinds of experiences and the learning that occurred within the study population. The interview questions may be found in Appendix F. First, the demographic surveys with the CIQ responses were provided to and completed by every participant between November and December 2022. The individual interviews were completed in December 2022, followed by the focus group in January 2023. The focus group occurred in January 2023, so that the researcher was prepared and informed by the earlier interview responses. This scheduling was deliberate, so the researcher could be informed by the interview responses, understand which themes resonated, and prepare for the focus group.

Figure 2. Research Design Overview



This format of three research methods allowed for a diversity of experiences to be shared, since each Indivisible chapter was slightly different, and included the commonality of each of them having been part of an Indivisible group.

Overview of Information Needed and Data Sources

The purpose of this study was to understand more about the factors that kept new activist participants involved in Indivisible, what and how they learned, and their experiences with

community in their social action efforts during the 2017-2020 time period. The researcher needed to collect demographic, contextual, and perceptual information in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the research questions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

The demographics of the study population are important in understanding how the experiences of this group of new activists may differ from other populations of new activists. Each participant was given a short 14-question demographic questionnaire to learn more about the participants in terms of age range, gender identity, race/ethnicity, parental status, geographic location, density of geographic location, highest level of education completed, years of work experience, industry of professional background, experience level, years of work experience, length of involvement with Indivisible, status of involvement with Indivisible, whether they had taken on a leadership role with Indivisible, and if they had been involved in other social action or civic engagement groups since 2017. Directly after the demographic questions were two questions related to additional participation. The last four questions were the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) questions with sub-probes. These questions were vital to learning more about a participant's perceptual and contextual experiences. The setting is not specific to one physical community. It included people in multiple locations who were all new participants in an Indivisible group, tied through the Indivisible umbrella organization. Indivisible was unique because local group members could develop the group and goals as they saw fit. The CIQ questions were written to understand contextual information. The demographic survey and CIQ questions may be found in Appendix F.

As noted, perceptual information was vital to the research questions. The participants' feelings about what they learned or how they changed through their activism get to the heart of the purpose of the study. The responses to the interview questions provided the needed

perceptual information. Interviews provided the forum for participants to offer more context and let the researcher know what they were thinking and feeling. Theoretical information was also necessary for the study. The theoretical background in Chapter 2 served to ground the study. The theoretical focus on experiential learning and social action identified areas for further research, especially around community, learning from experience, and emotional engagement. These core areas informed the conceptual framework, the selection of appropriate methods to address the research questions, and the development of codes.

The Study Sample and Selection Criteria

The researcher sought out a diverse sample of participants from around the country, with the understanding that the experiences potentially varied in each region or even chapter. Creswell & Poth (2007) noted there are many options for “purposeful sampling” and they “prefer to select cases that show different perspectives on the problem, process, or event I want to portray” (p. 75). Chapter 5 will highlight some of these different perspectives. All the participants had to have been affiliated under the Indivisible umbrella, however, and their learning experiences or motivating factors helped to explain why they stayed involved during a turbulent political time. The Indivisible organization’s website had a “find your local group” tab, which was useful in identifying chapters across the United States. The researcher made the decision to reach out to chapters in all 50 states to make efforts to keep study participation as broad as possible.

On a state-by-state basis in early October 2022, initial email outreach started with active Indivisible chapters in order to source participants (IRB approved letter in Appendix D), as well as Facebook messages (IRB message in Appendix E). The Facebook messages were shorter than the emails due to the acceptable length of a Facebook message. Information about the study was provided, which began with the short demographic survey and CIQ (Appendix F), along with the

additional options to participate in an interview or a focus group. If a participant was interested in learning more, they were sent the Informed Consent Forms (Appendices A, B, and C).

By mid-October 2022, due to minimal responses to the initial email to chapters in 50 states, the researcher sent another round of 50 emails to chapters around the country. Whenever the researcher had an email bounceback, she would send a new email to a different chapter in that state. The researcher believes the email outreach was overly formal and cumbersome and would not recommend using this template (Appendix D). The Facebook messages to the closed Facebook Indivisible groups had more traction. The researcher would send a message to the group, or the listed moderator, depending on the Facebook group setting. The researcher also created an account on Twitter and followed every active Indivisible Twitter account she could find in September and October 2022. She first posted the IRB approved message (Appendix E) in a post on October 22, 2022, but did not share the Qualtrics link publicly. After people open to participating were able to contact her, she could then briefly research their chapter. The second Twitter post was made on November 10, 2022, two days after the midterm elections. This timing proved particularly effective: participants had just wrapped up their November 8, 2022, Election Day activism efforts. In hindsight, the researcher would have concentrated all outreach efforts immediately after the election when the members had more time and possibly felt receptive to reflection after an intense time.

Snowballing and broader outreach are sometimes used in qualitative studies when sourcing participants proves to be challenging. Streeton et al. (2004) wrote, “Implicit in this concept is that the behaviour or trait under study must be a social activity; hence it is necessary to target members of a network” (p. 37). Indivisible participants were part of a network. As noted, the researcher had a systematic method for how to source candidates, reaching out to

chapters in all 50 states. In her estimation, this email outreach largely failed. She contacted more than 100 groups by email; only two participants opted in through the formal email to the Indivisible chapter non-Facebook websites. The researcher's Facebook messages proved more effective in having participants opt into the study. The Twitter post led to the most study interest. In addition, several participants in the study offered to post about the study opportunity in closed Indivisible groups. Three of these posts were accessible to groups in three states: one in the mid-Atlantic, one in the Southwest, and one in the West.

Rapley (2014) wrote that "thinking about and categorizing your sampling strategies does not always occur prospectively or over different rounds of sampling" (p. 54), and with purposive sampling, "it is enough to make good, analytically driven, thoughtful, decisions" (p. 55). The researcher spoke to her dissertation advisor, who recommended speaking to all participants who met the study requirements and IRB approvals. The experiences of the participants were unknown and could all offer insight into the study focus. In this case, the sampling involved casting a wider net and being flexible with the format; the researcher's initial preference was email, over Facebook or Twitter. The researcher's sampling strategy evolved to include everyone who met the study criteria and opted into the Qualtrics study from November through December 2022. This was achieved through a combination of intentional country-wide group outreach, limited social media posts, and group members forwarding or posting the opportunity. The researcher did not send additional queries to Indivisible groups to source more participants once there was enough momentum, study interest, and the upper limit of study participants would be met. The timing worked well; the researcher did not want to pose a burden, as many Indivisible participants had been very involved with the November 2022 midterm elections.

The researcher's initial goal was to have 30-40 participants complete the first part of the study; this included the demographic survey and CIQ. Fifty-five participants total met the study requirements and fully filled out the first part of the study, including the Demographic survey and at least one Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) prompt. The majority of CIQ participants completed all four of the CIQ prompts. It was not mandatory to fill out every prompt; the researcher thought some people might not want to share experiences or responses for all prompts.

The researcher anticipated conducting 16-22 Zoom interviews and ultimately conducted 23 Zoom interviews. One interview was excluded; during the interview, it became clear the participant had an activism involvement history prior to 2016; they did not meet the study criteria. Twenty-two Zoom interviews were included in the study sample. The researcher had the goal of conducting a focus group with four to eight participants, confirmed five participants, and four focus group participants showed up for the scheduled Zoom meeting. The focus group participants did not participate in an individual interview. All participants in the interviews and focus group had already completed the demographic survey with the CIQ questions.

In terms of selection criteria, the participants needed to have been involved in Indivisible during the 2017-2020 window for at least two years. They also could not have been active in an activist group prior to the 2016 elections. By this, the researcher means that if someone had occasionally signed a petition or made political donations, they would have still been eligible. If prior to 2017, they regularly attended weekly meetings of a group involved in social action work, they would not have been ineligible. Multiple people responded to the researcher's study invitation with some variation of "I don't qualify, but thanks." Creswell & Poth (2007) explained, "Some case studies may not have clean beginning and ending points, and the

researcher will need to set boundaries that adequately surround the case” (p. 76). With this case study, there was a strong period of respondent interest in November and December 2022; then this completely dropped off. The researcher emailed everyone who completed the CIQ who was open to future participation with the option to participate in an individual interview or to be part of a focus group. Everyone who responded positively was interviewed or scheduled for the focus group. Participants who did not respond were not contacted further. The researcher had initially planned to prioritize participants involved for the full-time period from 2017 to 2020; because of attrition and original sourcing issues, the researcher decided to follow up with all of the leads. She believed there could be valuable insights from the participants involved for a shorter time. The majority of the study participants (93%) were involved for four or five-plus years; only four participants were involved for two or three years.

Methods for Data Collection

The three methods for data collection were a Demographic Survey with Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) (n=55); in-depth interviews (n=22); and a focus group (n=4). All study participants first opted in with the first Informed Consent Form (Appendix A), and then filled out a brief Demographic Survey Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ), along with their preferences for additional study participation. Participants who responded they would do an interview after completing the survey were sent the Informed Consent Form for the Interview (Appendix B). Participants who responded they would participate in the focus group were sent the Informed Consent Form for the Focus Group (Appendix C). This process was managed through Qualtrics.

Study participation was limited to three possibilities. These included participating in the demographic survey with CIQ only (n=29); participating in the demographic survey with CIQ and an interview (n=22), or participating in the demographic survey with CIQ and the focus

group (n=4). This next section addresses the rationale for the methodology for this case study, as well as more in-depth details about each study method.

Demographic Survey with Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ)

This study included a short survey of 14 questions to shed light and provide demographic information about the participants, with two additional questions about the options for additional participation. For collection purposes, and to save the time and efforts of participants, the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) questions were at the end of this survey. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) recommended gathering data related to age, sex, educational attainment, and experience, “even if the theoretical framework does not necessitate including these variables” (p. 150). In this case, early data showed that Indivisible participants may be largely white and middle-aged (Maresca & Meyer, 2020; Schroeder et al., 2020). These demographic questions helped to check on the subset of new activists who opted into this study.

The Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) developed for the study was based on Dr. Brookfield’s (2019a) Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) instrument. Brookfield (2006) originally used the instrument to view his practice from his students’ perspective when they were asked about “specific events and actions that are engaging, distancing, confusing, or helpful” (p. 42). He gained a sense of how the learners experienced their learning through the recounting of specific incidents, rather than more general sentiments. Brookfield (2006) wrote, “The point is to situate your teaching in an understanding of the emotional, cognitive, and political ebbs and flows of group learning” (p. 54). Brookfield and Preskill (2009a) discussed how the CIQ could be used as an evaluative tool as an “attempt at openness,” and when it is used in a classroom setting, students do not put their name on the form. In this study, the CIQ was an attempt for openness. The Demographic Survey and Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) research

instrument allowed for the inclusion of additional voices of participants with their moments, experiences, or learnings. Participants were able to anonymously submit their experience via Qualtrics, without having to engage in a direct conversation with the researcher. The participants were heard from in their own voices. The instrument was designed to foster critical reflection, and the reported experience would be part of the considered CIQs.

In this study, there were four CIQ prompts asking the respondent to reflect and focus on up to four incidents related to their involvement with Invisible activities. These four prompts with sub-questions may be found at the end of Appendix F. They asked about a time the participant learned something new within the Indivisible community, something about them that had changed, a time in which they felt connected to someone through their Indivisible participation, and a time in which they felt disconnected. They were then asked to describe any details about the situation, what they learned, who they learned it from, thoughts or feelings they had about the experience, what they remembered, the speed in which they changed, what they did with roadblocks, and what could have made them feel less disconnected. In addition to the four main questions, there were 16 sub-question prompts that participants could respond to within the CIQ.

The purpose of this questionnaire was for participants to have the opportunity to reflect and include what might have been emotional and also learning opportunities. This allowed additional people to participate who might not feel comfortable also committing to a longer interview or focus group. The researcher thought some participants might prefer to write down their experiences or thoughts, rather than respond to questions by Zoom, and she wanted the case study to include these participants. If the participant did not wish to type their responses, they had the option to call a Google voice phone number and record a message with their thoughts

and reactions. No one elected to do this. Every study participant submitted the CIQ, and for Group B (Interview Population) and Group C (Focus Group population), the CIQ was received before the participants' second form of participation. This background was helpful to the interviewer in advance of both the interview and the focus group.

As a research tool, the CIQ was created to foster reflection and to develop critical assessment skills (Brookfield, 2006, pp. 47-51; Embrey & Taggart, 2022, p. 45). While the CIQ was often used within a classroom setting to check in with where participants were and to acknowledge their feelings (Keefer, 2009, p. 177), this study adapted the template to promote reflective practice related to the study focus and capture additional information about the participant's experiences when they pursued social action initiatives in Indivisible. The participant could choose to disclose information about their experiences as a new activist in an Indivisible group; they could do so without attribution. The researcher hoped the initial reflection that took place during the CIQ might lead to additional reflection before an interview or focus group, if they decided to opt into that. The CIQ participants could indicate that they were open to further participation within the body of the demographic survey. The lower CIQ time expectations created less of a participation barrier. The researcher appreciated having a window of at least a couple of days before meeting the participant online for an interview.

Phelan (2012) explained that the CIQ was a useful mechanism to help foster critical reflection, and called it a "qualitative tool, designed for repeated use, and designed to reveal assumptions about teaching practice that, upon exposure and reflection, can allow for better quality teaching," with the main purpose being to learn more about students' critical thinking (p. 33). Embrey and Taggart (2022) stated that the CIQ was a "validated tool" used in many different kinds of educational settings, which was helpful as they sought to learn more about the

“perceptions of the teaching-learning experience” (p. 44). Information from the CIQ could be used to decrease attrition rates for students and inform when interventions may be used with new students (Embrey & Taggart, 2022, p. 45). The survey and CIQ may be found in Appendix F.

Interviews

Interviews have been called “an essential source of case study evidence” (Yin, 2009, p. 108), and in this case study, open-ended questions were necessary to learn about the experiences of the newer activists involved in this recent social action work. Maxwell (2013) explained that interviewing “is used to understand the perspectives and goals of actors” (p. 102). Interviews allowed participants to describe their reasons to become involved, how they sustained their involvement, what was their learning, and what were their interactions with community members. Interviews were particularly important to this case study; the detailed, personal experiences the researcher sought to learn about could not be fully captured through a survey. Owens (2006) wrote,

The success or failure of any given narrative is a collaborative venture between the teller and the listener.... For qualitative researchers intent on deepening the understanding of emotionally laden experiences, awareness of this co-authorship brings the responsibility to expand the conversational space of the interview so that the participant may recount difficult experiences with greater ease. (p. 1161)

This need for an open conversational space was a priority for the researcher. To create this space, the interviewer needed to establish rapport by being “sincere, pleasant, and nonevaluative” (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p. 119). The researcher explained briefly at the beginning of the interview that she was a doctoral candidate interested in studying learning and leadership. Some participants asked if they could ask questions about her program at the end of the interview; they were assured they could. Rapport was developed through active listening, positive nonverbal communication, and being comfortable with moments of silence.

Creswell & Poth (2007) gave many options in which interviews could be conducted, ranging from unstructured and unrecorded, to email interviews. For this study, the researcher decided on the semi-structured, recorded, and transcribed version (p. 130). This case study included 22 semi-structured Zoom interviews. In terms of protocol, the research questions had multiple corresponding interview questions and prompts. Because the questions were by design open-ended, participants often addressed several different topics in their responses, or answered a different research question. This was expected; the interview protocol kept the process systematic. Some participants gave longer descriptions and started covering sub-questions from all three research questions in the study. This was part of their recollection process. The researcher was able to then move on to interview questions that had not yet been addressed.

The multiple interview questions for each research question increased the researcher's understanding of the participants' decision-making process and reasons for staying involved. The interview questions were relatively open-ended, and the researcher used a protocol with predetermined follow-up or clarifying questions. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) offered many recommendations for probing strategies, such as "Could you please tell me more about..." "Could you please give me an example?," using silence, paraphrasing and asking for confirmation (p. 115). These helpful strategies were used throughout the interviews. The full interview protocol may be found in Appendix G.

The setting for the interviews was on Zoom, selected due to COVID-19 related health concerns and geographical distances. Coordinating the mutual availability of both the participant candidate and the interviewer was another factor. Prior to the case study interviews, participants were sent a copy of the Interview Informed Consent form (Appendix B) to explain the research objectives, parameters, and timeframe, and to identify possible risks. The informed consent form

was signed in advance on Qualtrics. Participants were notified that the research interview was completely voluntary; they had the ability to end participation at any time. No one elected to withdraw once they started the interview. Recordings were destroyed after accurate transcripts were finalized.

Focus Group

In the study, the focus group provided a greater understanding of how the new activists persisted in their participation, along with their experiences with learning and community. Prior to the focus group, the participants had completed the demographic survey and CIQ, but had not participated in interviews. Yin (2018) wrote that with a focus group, after convening, “you would then moderate a discussion about some aspect of your case study, deliberately trying to surface the views of each person in the group” (p. 119). Liamputtong (2011) recommended a less structured focus group approach for research in the social sciences, in which participants “are encouraged to talk to each other instead of answering the moderators’ questions,” so the role of moderator is to “facilitate discussion, rather than to direct it” (p. 3). The researcher believed this approach to the focus group with ‘new activists’ affiliated with Indivisible provided the most natural format. Focus groups could be thought of as “collective conversations” in which participants with related or comparable experiences discussed a specific issue or topic for a greater understanding of the research questions, giving participants more control (pp. 3-4). Focus groups should generate data in a setting that is both comfortable and unthreatening (Tran et al., 2021, p. 3). Consensus is not a goal. A focus group can lead to more information about perspectives, perceptions, attitudes, opinions, or behaviors in what should ideally be a comfortable atmosphere (Liamputtong, 2011, pp. 3-4). The researcher wanted participants to feel free to express any of their thoughts or to share their experiences in a safe space, with an

understanding that the process of becoming involved in activism may have been an emotional one. Because each participant had experiences as a new activist and was in support of the efforts of Indivisible, the researcher thought this would lead to a safer space.

Kitzinger (2005) noted that focus group research can be conducted with as little as 3 or as many as 15 contributors, identifying between 4 and 8 as often ideal, with over-recruiting prudent due to potential cancellations (p. 61). The researcher recruited five participants; four participants attended. This proved fruitful, because participants had ample time to hear each other and participate in the process. These participants met the study criteria of having been active with Indivisible groups for a minimum of two years in the 2017-2020 window. All of them had participated for four to five years, which was representative of the overall study sample. The researcher began by making a statement about keeping disclosures private. This virtual focus group was face-to-face via Zoom; the chat function was activated as an extra communication and data source. Participants were encouraged to converse and speak up during the focus group, and they were given the opportunity to add any thoughts to the chat. Tran et al. (2012) found that virtual focus groups “may generate a larger number of ideas and solutions compared to in-person focus groups, where a larger number of words and interactions is produced” (p. 2). The researcher’s professional experience had been when participants may all contribute at the same time, while reading along, and validating or adding a different perspective, the chats could generate rich conversations touching on many topics. Despite this, the focus group participants did not use the chat. The focus group was transcribed, and the focus group guide may be found in Appendix H. The focus group recording was destroyed after the final transcript was completed.

Rationale for Methods Selection

Maxwell (2013) described the importance of “using different methods as a check on one another, [and] seeing if methods with different strengths and limitations all support a single conclusion” (p. 102) for the purpose of triangulation. Yin (2018) stated it is “a reasonable approach” to “corroborate interview data with information from other sources” (p. 121). The researcher expected the interviews to provide rich data, and wanted to also include the Demographic Survey with the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ), and the focus group, so these methods could serve as a check on each other. The researcher had experience using CIQs as a participant in a workshop series. She had found the opportunity to share thoughts and reflections about what was resonating most, or not resonating, to be useful in informing the faculty’s understanding of where a participant was as a learner. It helped the workshop series professor understand the landscape of the learning community and where there could be room for interventions to improve learning and feelings of comfort. The CIQ topics and questions were designed so participants had multiple open-ended opportunities to describe their experiences. CIQs also provided additional information, not necessarily included in other research methods (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The CIQ encouraged reflection by study participants, on the factors that helped participants stay involved, and served as a triangulation checkpoint. It incorporated responses from participants who preferred sharing or expressing thoughts in a written format, rather than an interview format.

This focus group was selected to supplement the interviews and provided more details about the variety of challenges that occurred for the new activists. The focus group methodology was partially selected so the discussion could provide additional insights, not previously identified through other research methods. The researcher also thought that because Indivisible

activists had experience working in a group or team environment with other Indivisible members, being able to hear how they talked about their common—and different—experiences depending on their chapter would be illustrative. In the discussion, they were able to mention when something resonated with them or made them think about something that happened along the way. The researcher thought the flexibility of participants being able to opt into the most comfortable methodology for them (e.g., a focus group discussion might be more appealing than something one-on-one) allowed for more people's experiences to be recorded in a deeper way.

Methods for Analysis and Synthesis of Data

The researcher used Creswell and Poth's (2007) data analysis spiral as a general guide, with the processes of collecting data, managing and organizing data, reading, writing notes, reflecting, categorizing, classifying, describing and interpreting data, and putting together reports and notes being concurrent and connected (p. 150). This was an iterative learning process. The researcher attempted to take notes during the interviews and found that simply writing a note or phrase was most helpful in order to return back to a specific recording section. After most of the interviews, the researcher made a voice memo of initial thoughts and impressions. It helped to do this directly after the research, so that it did not blend with a subsequent interview. The researcher jotted down preliminary thoughts during the focus group to use in conjunction with their transcripts; these were minimal given the need to concentrate on all four participants. Otter.ai was first used to create transcriptions for the interviews and the focus group. The researcher used Sunday as a regular time for reflection and consideration of study materials.

Interview responses were transcribed throughout the process of interviewing new participants to help inform additional coding categories. The researcher reread each transcription and recorded additional notes or subsequent impressions. Each transcript was checked for

accuracy to avoid human error (Gibbs, 2018). This was time-intensive. The researcher had to review both the Otter.ai transcript and the Zoom transcript and recording for an accurate account. She listened to excerpts of the recordings while reviewing the transcript to account for any mishearing or typing errors. For several early interviews, the researcher wrote memos with quotes or themes of particular note. She added to the coding scheme, post-interview, if a key or new idea came up. Because the case study was exploratory, the researcher thought it unfolded in a way that allowed flexibility, and ensured the research was reflected in the coding and findings.

After the interviews and the focus group were transcribed, the researcher evaluated her notes, reflected, and then employed ATLAS.ti for the formal coding. A preliminary coding scheme (Appendix I) was developed prior to sourcing participants. These codes came from the adult learning literature, especially in relation to learning from experience and social action, as well as articles available in the news and magazines about activism post-Trump election. The researcher was also informed by message boards, conversations with people upset post-election, and brainstorming with classmates. Barbour (2014) discussed how researchers must continue to work on their coding categories, thinking of antonyms of possible coding categories, since “much of the work in explicating and refining coding categories is carried out ‘backstage’” (p. 501-502). Saldaña (2021) offered suggestions for the first-time researcher, and the first round of coding included open coding and in vivo coding.

Seidman (2019) discussed coding challenges like “coding too much too quickly” and overcoding (p. 141). The researcher made a point not to code too quickly and, on review, coded more slowly than projected. With the detailed transcript coding, the interviews were analyzed for ‘key moments.’ Sullivan (2011) described the approach of using ‘key moments’ or ‘key extracts,’ which they defined as “an utterance is a significant unit of meaning, different from the

sentence or the line and is defined by its readiness for a reply/reaction” (p. 72). These moments were used in the dissertation text to focus on the kinds of learning and factors for sustained action. The researcher used the preliminary coding scheme as a starting point, and continued to add codes throughout. Thematic categories emerged from the transcripts and CIQ responses. Upon review of Saldaña (2021), she concentrated on concept coding, as it is “appropriate for all types of data,” and being able to apply the codes to larger parts of data, which spoke to a specific idea or concept was a good fit for this study (p. 153). The researcher was interested in the larger concepts that were applicable to the participants’ experiences, and often these were discussed over the course of one or two paragraphs of reflections. A coded transcript excerpt may be found in Appendix S.

Several emergent themes were added to the final coding scheme and may be found in the tables below. There were seven identified sub-factors that helped sustain involvement, five learning and changes findings, five community facilitators for learning, and two community impediments to learning. The community facilitators for learning, such as ‘CF9. Resources, training and workshops,’ were logical in retrospect. Other emergent themes, such as ‘CF8. Participants gained access to politicians or public figures,’ were unexpected. This theme emerged through an analysis of the transcripts, critical incident questionnaire responses, and voice notes.

Table 1. Factors for Sustained Involvement

Finding	Code	Thematic Category	Literature or Emergent
SF1	SCGTE	Committed community members and relationships	Brookfield & Preskill (2009); Brown & Shaked (2018); Daloz et al. (1996), Ganz (2009), Gose & Skocpol (2019); Greenberg & Levin (2019); Horton & Jacobs (2003); Ollis (2012); Schön (1987b)
SF2	SEE	Emotional engagement and passion for the work	Ganz (2009); Gose & Skocpol (2019); Ollis (2012)
SF3	SCC	Increased consciousness	Brookfield (2019b); Daloz et al. (1996); Farago et al. (2018); Freire (1993)
SF4	SSOD	Sense of duty and values, not an option to quit	Emergent
SF5	SMNP	Motivated by the opposition	Emergent
SF6	SMDMP	Making a difference and thinking more was possible	Ganz (2009); Gose & Skocpol (2019); Greenberg & Levin (2019)
SF7	SFPM	Feeling like they had a purpose or meaning	Gose & Skocpol (2019); Greenberg & Levin (2019), Kilgore (1999)
SF8	SICAW	Having their identity change to be aligned	Daloz et al. (1996); Ollis (2012)

One difference between the final thematic categories and the initial coding scheme was the identification of sub-factors that helped to sustain involvement. They were not the primary reasons for commitment but did aid with their successful involvement. One example is having a supportive family or friends. This helped participants with support at home, but was not a primary driver in the same way as having their identity change to become aligned with the work.

Table 2. Sub-factors that Helped Sustain Involvement

Finding	Code	Thematic category	Literature or Emergent
SI1	SCON	Things the participant wants to be a part of or accomplish	Emergent
SI2	SFA	Participants felt appreciated, received validation	Emergent
SI3	SFLX	Flexible format, worked for interests and contexts	Emergent
SI4	SSFF	Supportive family members and friends	Emergent
SI5	SMHAE	Motivated by hope, and elections (which create hope)	Emergent
SI6	SREC	Realized they are one among many, every bit counts	Emergent
SI7	STTW	Taking breaks from the work and technology	Emergent

Table 3. Hindered Involvement

Finding	Code	Thematic category	Literature or Emergent
HI1	DBNT	Burnout hindered involvement	Cahill & Mould (2018); Chen & Gorski (2015); Gorski et al. (2019); Logan et al. (2017)
HI2	DGD	Group dynamics or issues with group members	Stockman (2018)
HI3	DVA	Disagreement with values or approaches	Skocpol (2021)

The initial coding scheme (Appendix I) had an extensive list of potential thematic categories. Due to the composition of the study population, the participants overwhelmingly had positive experiences within the context of their Indivisible experiences.

Table 4. Learning and Change

Finding	Code	Thematic category	Literature or Emergent
LF1	LLHTP	Learning how to be an effective citizen and get things done	Emergent
LF2	LACORG	Participants learned about activism and how to organized	Ganz (2009); Greenberg & Levin (2019); Horton (2003)
LF3	LCEV	Participants learned about health, social, political, etc	Stowe (2013)
LF4	LCUPK	Participants learned to contribute and use prior knowledge	Ganz (2009); Greenberg & Levin (2019)
LF5	LCOM	Participants learned to create community and work together	Brookfield & Preskill (2009); Horton (2003)
LF6	LIC	Participants had increased consciousness	Kilgore (1999)
LF7	LLDPD	Participants experienced leadership and personal development	Brookfield & Preskill (2009); Ganz (2009); Greenberg & Levin (2019)
LF8	LMCOC	Ventured out of comfort zone, and gained confidence	Emergent
LF9	EMP	Participants felt empowered	Emergent
LF10	LASSV	Participants became more assertive	Emergent
LF11	LBMP	Becoming more political and politically engaged	Emergent

Within Chapter 5, these learning and change categories are discussed in detail under five subheadings. The researcher includes these charts to be transparent about which thematic categories originated from the literature, and which emerged from the research. These categories may be found in the literature, but the researcher did not anticipate them in advance.

Table 5. Community Learning Facilitators

Finding	Code	Thematic category	Literature or Emergent
CF1	ACRF	Community relationships and friendships	Ganz (2009); Greenberg & Levin (2019)
CF2	COLMP	Participants felt comfortable with like-minded people	Emergent
CF3	PSFOG	Group members provided different kinds of support	Brookfield & Preskill (2009)
CF4	ADGD	Group discussion and dialogue supported learning	Daloz et al. (1996); Lindeman (1945)
CF5	CPFE	There was a place for everyone	Emergent
CF6	PILS	Participants learned from inspiring leadership	Brookfield & Preskill (2009)
CF7	AOCG	Opportunities with coalition groups facilitated learning	Emergent
CF8	POGTKP	Participants gained access to politicians or public figures	Emergent
CF9	ARES	Resources, training and workshops	Emergent

Table 6. Community Learning Impediments

Finding	Code	Thematic category	Literature or Emergent
CI1	NWSE	Participants felt they were not working for the same goals	Ganz (2009)
CI2	NEVB	Everyone is busy, limited bandwidth	Emergent
CI3	NCOV	COVID-19 Limited in-person meetings or affected group	Emergent

The coding scheme was applied to the CIQ responses, interviews, and focus groups because the same concepts and themes emerged from the survey instruments. The researcher had considered assessing responses separately; however, there was significant overlap between the responses. Many times interview participants wanted to discuss something they had referenced in their CIQ. Other times, CIQ-only participants used a CIQ question prompt as a starting point to include thoughts about Indivisible that were not necessarily relevant to the starting prompt. Because common experiences were described across all three study instruments, the researcher elected to present the findings with a thorough breakdown for the reader with how often the concept came up across the sample. These findings are discussed in-text in Chapters 4 and 5, with tables in Appendices L to R.

Inter-rater reliability is important for appropriate coding alignment. Two of the researcher’s trusted doctoral colleagues coded two interviews for the purpose of inter-rater reliability, one in July 2023 and the other in November 2023. The researcher sent transcripts to her colleagues in advance. She then scheduled a separate conversation with each colleague to go through the transcripts and review codes and recommendations to ensure appropriate code

consensus. The initial plan was to hold the inter-rater reliability sessions one month apart, but scheduling proved to be challenging. The Teachers College colleagues were well versed with the requirements of confidentiality, and they were reminded of this at the start of the process. The first colleague used the coding scheme in Appendix I; the second colleague used the final coding scheme in Appendix J. The researcher had gone through this process for other colleagues and found it helpful to consider and discuss the most appropriate codes for each section. The first inter-rater recommended considering emotion within the transcripts. This suggestion was relevant to the finding “SF2. Emotional engagement and passion led to sustained involvement.” The researcher re-reviewed the transcripts to see where emotional aspects were discussed. ATLAS also had a “text search” feature, and the researcher then also searched for words like “emotion” and “passion.” The inter-rater colleagues and the researcher had coding alignment at their separate sessions; both completed this process with ten-page transcripts for two separate interview participants. The inter-rater process was important for ensuring coding alignment, and the most significant outcome was focusing more on emotional engagement at the July 2023 session. One unexpected benefit of having the space in time between the sessions was that the researcher was able to go through all the transcripts again to look at emotional engagement before meeting with her second colleague. This led to additional review of assigned codes.

The researcher reviewed the coding for all of the documents to ensure the interviews coded first were not missing codes in November 2023. This was done after the second inter-rater meeting. The final coding scheme was a result of iterative passes of the applied scheme and was augmented with emergent concept codes. It is shorter than the initial coding scheme, as not every code was applicable to this study. All codes with referenced citations originally came from the literature. In the final scheme, there were eight factors for sustained involvement, seven

sub-factors that helped to sustain involvement, and three factors that hindered involvement. In terms of learning and changes, there were eleven categories for learning and changes, nine community facilitators for learning, and three community impediments to learning or growth. Every transcript was coded with the final coding scheme in Appendix J; it was uniformly applied to the interviews, focus group, and CIQ responses.

Confirmability and reliability are two topics that were considered during the data analysis and synthesis period. With reliability, a study can be repeated with the same results (Yin, 2018, p. 42). This study does *not* assert that the same findings would result from a different group of new activists; this will be discussed further in the “Limitations and Generalizability” section. The study had a number of similar themes and ideas expressed by the participants. This was for a specific moment in time, and the researcher believes that a large-scale ‘trigger’ may change the results depending on the particulars of the movement or group. The data collection procedures could be repeated by sourcing a sample, using the study instruments, and conducting research in a tight window after a large midterm election. The final coding scheme could be used as a starting point, with the researcher adding codes to the scheme as they were identified from the analysis of the transcripts. This study could be done with a different new social action or civic engagement organization. It could include new activist participants of a different group, possibly after another presidential election or event. This study was itself exploratory. The researcher sees this preliminary, yet in-depth, research as shedding light on the research questions, and providing insights from the experiences of new activists in a newly developing group at one point in time.

Creswell & Poth (2007) offered ways for a researcher to improve reliability, such as using good recording equipment, and transcribing seemingly small details, such as “pauses and overlaps” (p. 209). While Otter.ai and Zoom were used for transcription, the researcher went

over transcripts slowly to check for accuracy and listened to recordings in conjunction with the transcripts to see if there was any missing information. As noted, this was a labor-intensive process. It occurred from November 2022 to March 2023. The researcher notes were helpful to flag interview sections for revisiting because of how a conversation unfolded. In order to achieve reliability with this specific population, the researcher also paraphrased the person being interviewed during the interview to check in and verify her understanding. The participants who participated in the CIQ were able to review their responses before they sent them in and also save their submissions to review. The focus group participants spoke to their experiences and were able to jointly respond to and consider each other's statements, and to react to study themes.

Seidman (2019) described how some scholars think that validity has to do with the researcher's write-up and the related knowledge claims that are derived from the data analysis (p. 29). In addition, Seidman advocated for speaking to enough participants so their accounts can be considered along with those of other participants. Seidman stated, "The goal of the process is to understand how our participants understand and make meaning of their experience" (p. 29). The researcher was careful to show the breakdown in responses by study instrument in order to better identify the frequency of a theme when considering the method.

Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations

The researcher was dedicated and determined to ensure the confidentiality of the study participants who generously volunteered their time and shared their experiences. Interviews were transcribed through Otter.ai, which had been approved by TC's IRB Office. These transcripts were matched against the automatically generated Zoom transcripts, which in general were less accurate. However, the researcher found the Zoom transcripts sometimes had subsections with

higher accuracy, so it was necessary to do this work slowly and methodically. After the researcher cleaned up the transcription files, she checked them against the audio files for accuracy. Participants' legal and informal names and other personally identifying information not relevant to the interview were redacted from the transcripts and the research report to protect privacy and confidentiality.

In the coding process, participants were first given participant numbers and pseudonyms; Indivisible identifiers were redacted. Several times participants suggested a pseudonym, as there was a spot to do so in Qualtrics. In some cases, a participant suggested a pseudonym that matched another participant's actual name. In the process of re-reviewing the findings, the researcher made the decision to refer to each participant by a number, for example, Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, etc.

Table 7. Participant Numbers and Research Methods

Participant Numbers	CIQ	Interview	Focus Group
1-29	X		
30-51	X	X	
52-55	X		X

Participants 1-29 completed the demographic survey and CIQ only. Participants 30-51 completed the demographic survey and CIQ, followed by an interview. Participants 52-55 completed the demographic survey and CIQ, followed by the focus group.

The researcher determined that the numbering system would limit some name associations or biases someone might have with a person's name and also better safeguard privacy and confidentiality. The researcher believed some CIQ participants selected that research

method to ensure full privacy. To further avoid participants' identification, the researcher made the decision to discuss research findings as segmented subsets, explaining how frequently a theme came up through the interviews vs. the CIQs. This strategy might have needed adjustment if the response analyses were significantly different for subsets, for example, gender, age, educational level or background, where they lived, their employment, or level of profession. The researcher experimented a great deal with segmenting out groups from the case study via ATLAS.ti by tagging the participants into specific groups based on demographic information, but did not find any significance to being part of a specific demographic subset for this study. The majority of the study sample were women (80%), participants who were 57 years and older (78%), and with a bachelor's degree or graduate degree (93%). The sample size was limited regarding professions (e.g., many having one each) and regions of the country (e.g., three people from New England), so it did not support segmenting. In addition, 93% of the participants had been involved for 4 to 5+ years, so segmenting out by experience was not considered. All the interviewed participants had been involved for at least four years. The reader will find participant demographic information in Appendix K, with a summary discussed further in Chapter 4.

Transcripts were stored in two places accessible only to the researcher: (1) electronically in a password-protected file on her researcher computer, and (2) an external hard drive in a locked filing cabinet in her residence. The only people with access to the study transcripts were the researcher, the researcher's academic advisors, and the Teachers College inter-rater reliability readers consisting of an advanced Teachers College doctoral candidate and a recent Teachers College doctoral graduate. The two inter-rater reliability readers assisted with checking the interviewer's coding, and their access to the transcripts was limited to large excerpts from two transcripts, with confidential information redacted. Notes from the interviews, focus group,

and CIQs were kept in password-protected files and folders, or shredded if they had identifying information. Otter.ai voice notes were deleted after usable information was incorporated into the analysis process.

After the June 2022 proposal hearing, the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) received submission of the study instruments in late June 2022. They reviewed the documents, along with their rubric and internal guides, to consider any potentially negative impacts that participants could deal with as a result of agreeing to participate in this research. They examined all of the materials in Appendices A-H, including the research protocols and the consent forms, to make sure they were appropriate and offered their approval on July 8, 2022. Creswell & Poth (2007) explained that the consent form often has certain components: the participant's right to step away from research whenever they choose, the focus and reasons for the study, the selected procedures, confidentiality, any "known risks," and any possible benefits (p. 123). As guided by the literature, the researcher treated all participants with dignity and made efforts to try to make them feel heard (Seidman, 2019, p. 151).

Validity

Gibbs (2018) defined research as valid "if the explanations are really true or accurate and correctly capture what is actually happening" (p. 128). Yin (2018) noted that "interviews should always be considered *verbal reports* only," with responses being subject to the possible problems of "bias, poor recall, and poor or inaccurate articulation" (p. 121). Because this case study was focused on the experiences of new activists, the researcher relied on the participants to be truthful and accurate with their Indivisible involvement and their activism timeframes. One reason for sourcing participants through the Indivisible "Find a Local Group" link on their website was to find people involved with social action work. Their group affiliation was a way to

verify their involvement was, in fact, real. Yin mentioned the issue of poor recall. This case study was constructed to speak with those who participated at least two years between 2017 and 2020; their participation was fairly recent. Another threat to validity was if interviewees did not present their actual views (Maxwell, 2013, p. 123); this was tempered by participants' awareness that only those volunteering for progressive causes were studied. Open-ended questions do not have an accuracy component: the correct answer is any response. Participants had the opportunity to skip any prompts on both the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) open-ended questions, as well as any questions during the interviews and focus group.

Maxwell (2013) identified the validity threat of "bias" and noted that "qualitative research is primarily concerned with understanding how a particular researcher's values and expectations may have influenced the conduct and conclusions of the study" (p. 124). With this study, the researcher did not purport to be neutral, believing some Trump administration actions were regressive toward specific groups of people. Because of the study parameters, participants may have felt more comfortable in explaining their motivations for staying involved and any learning that occurred. Creswell and Miller (2000) discussed the importance of the lens of the researcher, writing, "Researchers determine how long to remain in the field, whether the data are saturated to establish good themes or categories, and how the analysis of the data evolves into a persuasive narrative" (p. 125). The researcher continued to review the data over time to ensure that the interpretations made sense and reflected upon the categories and explanations. This occurred concurrently with coding, and coding refinement from April through December 2023. Finally, in relation to the validity threat of reactivity, the researcher made efforts to avoid leading questions (Maxwell, 2013, p. 125). Another tool the researcher used was respondent validation: feedback was solicited about data and conclusions from participants in a systematic way to

prevent misunderstandings (pp. 126-127). The researcher checked in throughout the interviews to make sure the participants were being understood. This included asking probing questions, rephrasing what participants said, and asking if the researcher understood them correctly. Participants were then able to confirm or clarify. Review of the transcripts showed that they confirmed that understanding was correct or offered additional information about the particulars of their experiences.

The researcher sought to ensure that the participants confirmed that their experiences were accurately described (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125). Doyle (2007) wrote, “Member checking is a process that can take many forms. It can be either continuous, or it can occur as a one off event, and can be formal or informal within the context of a qualitative research study” (p. 893). All interview participants had already participated in the demographic survey and CIQ, which included four long-form responses. The interview itself served as a follow-up member check. The researcher read relevant excerpts of the participants’ CIQ responses out loud to them to verify if they were accurate. The participants had the opportunity to respond with additional thoughts, and the opportunity to offer clarifying details. No one disagreed with their previously written accounts. They were able to confirm their experiences and report additional information about their Indivisible experiences. The CIQ responses were sent electronically to participants who requested receiving them on Qualtrics. Participants were provided the researcher’s email address and phone number to encourage them to reach out if they thought of anything else they would like to mention. Five interview participants shared additional links with the researcher.

Each interview participant was emailed a thank you with an individualized summary, which mentioned sustained involvement elements and learning the participant referenced within the context of their involvement with Indivisible. Participants frequently emailed back that the

interview was positive, and it had been a nice experience to reflect on everything they had been involved with during their time with Indivisible. These response emails to the researcher's thank you and summary were affirmative; no one disputed or otherwise commented on the researcher's identified themes. The researcher determined that participants felt comfortable with the interview experience and were authentically heard. The interview population had high communication skill levels and expressed interest in the study. Not everyone responded to the researcher's summary follow-up email; several participants said in the interview they needed to take a break and unplug after the 2022 election. Following the last interview by almost one month, the focus group participants confirmed and discussed the early interview themes, serving as additional member checks. The interview themes were consistently affirmed in the discussion; no disparity was discussed.

The participant quotes are from the interview and focus group transcripts, as well as the CIQ written responses. The thematic category the researcher has assigned to each section is indicated. Some sections could be assigned more than one code. For example, if a participant learned within the context of a community-facilitated workshop (Code: ARES) and was taught by an elected politician (Code: POGTKP), this excerpt would be assigned with two facilitator codes. The researcher included sections so the reader could assess the relevance of the category, have the opportunity to hear the participants' voices, and make their own determinations regarding this research. Appendix U includes brief participant notes with information obtained from the demographic surveys and CIQ responses, for a fuller picture of the total study population. The participant notes include their region of the country, the number of years of Indivisible involvement, and if they had other social action group involvement since 2017.

Limitations and Generalizability

The scope of this research is limited by the researcher acting as a solo and new researcher. Many studies related to activism post-Trump were conducted by experienced teams or well-regarded faculty members (Fisher et al., 2018; Schroeder et al., 2020; Skocpol et al., 2020). Research supervised by more experienced scholars with funding would be of a different scale and breadth. Another study limitation is generalizability. Generalizability can be thought about as the appropriateness of the extension of research results to situations other than the specific one being studied (Polit & Beck, 2010). Maxwell (2013) wrote that “qualitative researchers usually study a single setting or a small number of individuals or sites, using theoretical or purposeful rather than probability sampling, and rarely make explicit claims about the generalizability of their accounts” (p. 137). Seidman (2019) wrote that one way of considering generalizability is “to ask whether what is learned from the interview sample can be generalized to the larger population. One step towards assuring generalizability is to select a sample that is representative of the larger population” (p. 137).

This study attempted to speak to a representative sample by seeking participants from across the nation in very different Indivisible chapters. The nationwide setting of living in the United States when President Trump was in office is the same; however, participants had different local contexts and issues. The study was not diverse in terms of race/ethnicity; the majority of participants identified as Caucasian/white (n=51). The few participants who observed that their groups were overwhelmingly white also noted that having more diversity could have provided more experiences, voices, and ideas. Though the study was not diverse in terms of race/ethnicity, it was representative of at least some of the Indivisible groups. In terms of age, the majority of participants (n=29) were over 65, with some self-identifying in their 70s, 80s, and

early 90s. The researcher had included the age range of 65 or over, not anticipating that the age breakdown could be overly broad. Further segmenting the ages in the demographic survey would have been informative for the study population, adjusting the ranges to 65-74, 75-84, and 85 and above. Four study participants were 48 and younger, and 51 participants were 49 or over. One participant noted it was likely the study included many ‘seniors,’ as they thought they had more time for activism because of retirement or career flexibility. An additional reason why the age information is relevant to have segmented details is because it has potential implications regarding other historical events that could have shaped participants choosing to be involved at this moment. For example, if someone was at an age that they could have been involved in the civil rights movement, but had not been involved at the time, later action may have some sort of relation to past decisions earlier in a person’s life. If someone has a very strong sense of duty and patriotism and their parent was drafted into World War II, perhaps there could have been a relationship between life events that could have been considered further. A more in-depth discussion of the demographic findings of the study is presented in Chapter 4 in the “Demographic Summary” section. It appears likely that some current Indivisible participants who were working full-time or had younger children did not feel they had the bandwidth to participate in a study. Other Indivisible participants may not have participated for other reasons, or they were not aware of the option to participate in the study. This is analyzed further in Chapter 5.

This study was focused on a very specific experience and timeframe: what it meant to be a new activist involved with an Indivisible group during the Trump presidency of 2017-2020, and what learning took place. While this cannot be generalized to a different population because context, timeframe, and variables will be different for new activists, Seidman (2019) described

how an in-depth interviewer could “go to such a depth ... that surface considerations of representativeness and generalizability are replaced by a compelling evocation of an individual’s experience” (p. 57). The research could then identify connections among the interviewed participants and assist the reader in understanding possible patterns between experiences (p 58). Maxwell (2013) explained that “qualitative studies often have what the statistician Judith Singer (personal communication) called ‘face generalizability’; there is no obvious reason not to believe that the results apply more generally” (p. 138). The researcher does not assert that this study fully maps or applies to the experiences of new activists in another burgeoning organization or movement, but with nuance and context, there are several ‘lessons learned’ or takeaways that could be useful in promoting involvement and learning within social action initiatives for the future.

Summary

The methodology chapter has sought to inform the reader about the study particulars, including how the study was constructed, the selected research methods, and the reasons for pursuing these research methods. This chapter also included information about how the research was stored, managed, prepared, coded, and analyzed, as well as information about study confidentiality and ethical considerations. The researcher acknowledged some limitations of the research methodology, while also offering ways the research findings could be of interest to other practitioners focused on promoting social action or civic engagement involvement, and supporting adult learners who want to become involved in this work. Chapters 4 and 5 will address the Research Findings that resulted from the aforementioned methodology.

Chapter 4: Demographic Summary and Sustained Involvement Findings

Introduction and Overview

This section presents an overview for Chapter 4 in which the sustained involvement research findings are presented. The chapter begins with a demographic summary to situate the reader and offers more information about the study participants. This is followed by the sustained involvement findings sections that focused on factors for sustained involvement, sub-factors that helped with sustaining involvement, and the factors that hindered involvement. The factors that will be discussed over the course of this chapter may be found in the tables below.

Table 8. Factors for Sustained Involvement

- Committed community members and relationships kept participants involved
- Emotional engagement and passion led to sustained involvement
- Increased Consciousness was a factor for sustained involvement
- Participants stayed involved through a sense of duty; it was not an option to quit
- Participants stayed involved because they were motivated by the opposition
- Making a difference and thinking more was possible supported their commitment
- Feeling like the participant had a purpose or meaning kept participants involved
- Having their identity change to be aligned with the work kept some participants involved

The researcher has included the frequency of occurrence findings in the different study instruments for each thematic category. The Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) responses ranged considerably in length and detail. The interviews provided the most individual time for

participants to respond to questions and share their experiences. The focus group was useful in terms of confirming and understanding the experiences. The researcher wanted to be clear which method resulted in specific themes and will also discuss the entire study population (n=55).

Table 9. Sustained Involvement Sub-factors

- It helped when participants had things they continued to want to be a part of or accomplish
- Participants felt appreciated and received validation
- Indivisible's flexible format helped participants make it work for their interests and contexts
- Supportive family members and friends helped participants stay involved
- Hope helped participants stay involved, and elections (which create hope)
- It helped to recognize they are one person among many, and every bit counts
- Taking breaks from work and technology helped activists stay involved

Table 10. Factors that Hindered Involvement

- Burnout could hinder involvement
- Group dynamics or issues with group members could hurt involvement
- Disagreement with values or approaches could hurt involvement

The researcher thinks it is important that the reader hear from the participants in their own words. As a result, there are quotes included in the text. Some are quite short and directly map to the specified thematic category. Others are longer and give a fuller picture of their self-reported learning, changes, or reasons for staying involved. This may facilitate the reader's understanding, as well as provide individual context and perspective. These examples are not meant to be representative of everyone's experience: one person's learnings in Indivisible would differ from someone else's. Some participants described the diversity of the professional

backgrounds of their group members and activities in the responses. The new activists were vital to the success of Indivisible chapters; hearing from them in their own voices is important.

Demographic Summary

The researcher sought to include participants from all around the United States in order to learn from the experiences of people in different regions. Due to initial sourcing challenges, and then a high response rate directly after Election Day, November 8, 2022, the researcher included everyone who fit the study criteria, filled out the Informed Consent Form, and submitted the CIQ. Responses flowed in for a 3½-week period, and the researcher did not want to lose momentum if potential participants dried up. In some ways, this was also a demographic snapshot of participants engaged in Indivisible activities directly after the 2022 Election, with the bandwidth and interest to commit to a survey, interview, or focus group after the election.

Parenthetical references that follow, for example (n=55), indicate the number of participants, which, in this case, equals the total study population of 55 participants.

Age

In terms of age groups, the highest study population was in the age range 65 years or older (n=29), and this group composed 53% of the total study of the CIQs, 59% of the 22 interviews, and 75% of the four focus group participants. In relation to the Gose and Skocpol (2019) study demographics, the participants in this study were a little older, as their study median ages for subset groups were 55 and 61. This study was conducted in 2022, a few years later than Gose and Skocpol's study was published; it is possible this study had a slightly higher age group since many participants reported being retired. The balance of the study participants were 25% in the 57-64 range (n=14), 15% in the 49-56 range (n=14), and 7% in the 48 years or

younger age range (n=4). Participants in the study remarked upon the age composition of their own groups; these demographic summary findings are in accord with the participants' remarks.

Gender

In terms of gender, women comprised 80% of the overall study sample (n=44), 68% of the interviews (n=15), and 100% of the focus group (n=4). Men composed 16% of the study sample (n=9), 32% of the interviews (n=7), and did not select focus group availability. Two participants identified as nonbinary, 4% of the study; neither selected interview or focus group availability. This demographic breakdown is not surprising; in Gose and Skocpol's (2019) analysis of group compositions, some groups were over 90% women.

Race/Ethnicity

The study population was predominantly Caucasian/White, with 93% of the population identified as Caucasian/White (n=51). Eighty-six percent of the interview population, and 100% of the focus group population was Caucasian/White. For the full study, two participants identified as Jewish, one participant identified as Latinx, and one participant identified as Black. The researcher did not anticipate the study's Race/Ethnicity would be quite as skewed, but it was similar to other related demographic research during this time. Schroeder et al.'s (2019) study of an online anti-Trump resistance community had a demographic breakdown, and 90.8% of participants were white. Gose and Skocpol (2019) found that 90% of participants in the new resistance groups were white. Han and Oyakawa (2018) wrote that Indivisible was a majority white organization. While the researcher would have liked to speak to a more diverse population, it does seem representative of at least some of the group compositions. Some participants in the study expressed their wish for more diversity in their group.

Overall Participants

The study included 55 participants overall for the total study CIQ, with 22 of those total study participants taking part in an additional interview. A different group of four of the total study participants took part in a focus group. Though everyone completed the CIQ (n=55), no one participated in all three: the CIQ, interview, and focus group. The participants broke down as the CIQ-only (n=29), the CIQ and interview (n=22), or the CIQ and focus group (n=4).

Table 11. Summary of Participant Demographic Information

Question Number	Demographic Question	Total Study (n = 55)	Interview Information (n = 22)	Focus Group Information (n = 4)
1	Age	26-32: 1	26-32: 0	26-32: 0
		33-40: 1	33-40: 0	33-40: 0
		41-48: 2	41-48: 1	41-48: 0
		49-56: 8	49-56: 3	49-56: 1
		57-64: 14	57-64: 5	57-64: 0
		65 or older: 29	65 or older: 13	65 or older: 3
2	Gender	Woman: 44	Woman: 15	Woman: 4
		Man: 9	Man: 7	Man: 0
		Nonbinary: 2	Nonbinary: 0	Nonbinary: 0
3	Race/Ethnicity	Black: 1	Black: 1	Black: 0
		Caucasian/ White: 51	Caucasian/ White: 19	Caucasian/ White: 4
		Latinx: 1	Latinx: 1	Latinx: 0
		Other- Jewish: 2	Other- Jewish: 1	Other- Jewish: 0

Table 11 (continued)

Question Number	Demographic Question	Total Study (n = 55)	Interview Information (n = 22)	Focus Group Information (n = 4)
4	Parent, or involved as a parental figure	No: 11	No: 3	No: 1
		Other: 1	Other: 1	Other: 0
		Yes: 40	Yes: 16	Yes: 2
		Yes, as an aunt, uncle, or godparent: 3	Yes, as an aunt, uncle, or godparent: 2	Yes, as an aunt, uncle, or godparent: 1
5	Part of the Country	Mid-Atlantic: 10	Mid-Atlantic: 6	Mid-Atlantic: 0
		Midwest: 15	Midwest: 3	Midwest: 2
		New England: 3	New England: 0	New England: 0
		South: 5	South: 1	South: 1
		Southwest: 15	Southwest: 7	Southwest: 1
		West: 7	West: 5	West: 0
6	Area Classification	Other: 2	Other: 1	Other: 0
		Rural: 11	Rural: 4	Rural: 0
		Suburban: 30	Suburban: 11	Suburban: 2
		Urban: 12	Urban: 6	Urban: 2
7	Highest level of education	High School: 2	High School: 2	High School: 0
		Associate's Degree: 2	Associate's Degree: 2	Associate's Degree: 0
		Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA): 15	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA): 5	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA): 1
		Master's Degree (MA or MS): 19	Master's Degree (MA or MS): 8	Master's Degree (MA or MS): 1
		Professional Master's Degree: 11	Professional Master's Degree: 4	Professional Master's Degree: 1
		Doctoral Degree: 6	Doctoral Degree: 1	Doctoral Degree: 1

Table 11 (continued)

Question Number	Demographic Question	Total Study (n = 55)	Interview Information (n = 22)	Focus Group Information (n = 4)
8	Primary industry of professional experience	Accounting/ Finance: 3	Accounting/ Finance: 1	Accounting/ Finance: 0
		Advertising/ Marketing: 1	Advertising/ Marketing: 0	Advertising/ Marketing: 0
		Architecture/ Design: 2	Architecture/ Design: 0	Architecture/ Design: 2
		Arts/ Entertainment/ Media: 2	Arts/ Entertainment/ Media: 2	Arts/ Entertainment/ Media: 0
		Computer Science/ Engineering/ Technology: 6	Computer Science/ Engineering/ Technology: 4	Computer Science/ Engineering/ Technology: 1
		Consulting: 2	Consulting: 1	Consulting: 0
		Education/ Teaching: 10	Education/ Teaching: 2	Education/ Teaching: 1
		Food Service: 1	Food Service: 0	Food Service: 0
		Insurance: 1	Insurance: 0	Insurance: 0
		International Development Assistance: 1	International Development Assistance: 1	International Development Assistance: 0
		Journalism and Publishing: 2	Journalism and Publishing: 2	Journalism and Publishing: 0
		Law: 2	Law: 1	Law: 0
		Nonprofit: 1	Nonprofit: 0	Nonprofit: 0
		Other- Healthcare: 6	Other- Healthcare: 1	Other- Healthcare: 0
		Other: 14	Other: 6	Other: 0
Travel Agent: 1	Travel Agent: 1	Travel Agent: 0		

Table 11 (continued)

Question Number	Demographic Question	Total Study (n = 55)	Interview Information (n = 22)	Focus Group Information (n = 4)
9	Level of professional experience	Entry level: 1	Entry level: 0	Entry level: 0
		Intermediate/ Experienced level: 8	Intermediate/ Experienced level: 2	Intermediate/ Experienced level: 0
		Management: 8	Management: 5	Management: 1
		Senior Management: 8	Senior Management: 3	Senior Management: 0
		Executive level: 7	Executive level: 4	Executive level: 1
		Other: 8	Other: 0	Other: 2
		Sole Practitioner: 2	Sole Practitioner: 1	Sole Practitioner: 0
		Sole proprietor: 1	Sole proprietor: 0	Sole proprietor: 0
		Self-employed: 7	Self-employed: 5	Self-employed: 0
		Not applicable: 5	Not applicable: 2	Not applicable: 0
10	Years involved with Indivisible	2: 2	2: 0	2: 0
		3: 2	3: 1	3: 0
		4: 11	4: 5	4: 3
		5+: 40	5+: 16	5+: 1
11	Leadership role with Indivisible (Y/N)	Yes: 37	Yes: 17	Yes: 3
		No: 18	No: 5	No: 1
12	Currently involvement status with Indivisible	Yes: 51	Yes: 22	Yes: 4
		No: 3	No: 0	No: 0
		Other: 1	Other: 0	Other: 0
13	Involvement with other social action or civic engagement groups since 2017	Yes: 38	Yes: 13	Yes: 3
		No: 17	No: 9	No: 1

Parental Status

In terms of parental status, “no” or “other” responses comprised 22% of the total study of CIQs (n=12), 18% of the interviews (n=4), and 25% of the focus group participants (n=1). The “yes” response for participants, including both parents or being involved as a parental figure composed 78% of the CIQs (n=43), 77% of the interviews (n=17), and 75% of the focus group (n=3). The researcher included parental status in case participants mentioned their children in relation to their sustained involvement; this did not come up regularly. One participant did mention doing activism work at games while their child played sports. Being a parent could be a factor for activism and sustained involvement in Indivisible or other social action groups. Exploring the parental status of the general population during the 2017-2020 timeframe would be necessary to make that determination, as this was a very small sample.

Region and Area Classification

The part of the country and area classification were also not significant in terms of the findings, but provide a fuller picture of this group. In terms of the part of the country, the study participants included 18% from the Mid-Atlantic (n=10), 27% from the Midwest (n=15), 5% from New England (n=3), 9% from the South (n=5), 25% from the Southwest (n=15), and 13% from the West (n=7). The researcher was appreciative that organizers in the Southwest, Mid-Atlantic, and West posted about the study in internal groups. This is why certain percentages may be higher. The majority, 55% (n=30), of participants lived in suburban areas, 22% (n=12) in urban areas, with the balance in rural or ‘other’ areas.

Highest Level of Education

In terms of education, the study sample was very educated, which was expected given past research on Indivisible (Gose & Skocpol, 2019). Of the study participants, 93% had a

bachelor's degree or higher (n=51), and 65% had graduate degrees: masters, professional masters, or doctorates (n=36). Professional industry experience was diverse, with the highest percentage of 18% from Education/Teaching backgrounds (n=10). The next highest were from Computer Science/Engineering/Technology backgrounds (n=6) and Healthcare (n=6). The professional experience levels varied greatly, and 42% of participants had management, senior management, or executive level backgrounds (n=23). The professional backgrounds and professional experience levels may be found for each participant in Appendix K. Participants did discuss prior professional experience, but the numbers were not high enough in any one professional category to consider participants with, for example, finance backgrounds.

Years of Involvement and Leadership Status

This population of new Indivisible activists was an involved group. At their time of participation in the 2022 study, 73% of the study participants had been involved for 5+ years, having started in 2017 (n=40). Another 20% had been involved for four years (n=11), with 7% involved for less than four years (n=4). The majority of total study participants, 67%, had taken on a leadership role (n=37). In the interview group, 77% of the population had taken on a leadership role (n=17). Involvement with other social action or civic engagement groups since 2017 included 69%, a majority of the full study participants (n=38). For the interview population, it was slightly less, with 59% of the participants also involved with other social action or civic engagement groups.

Sustained Involvement Findings

This section presents the research findings on the factors participants reported kept them involved with Indivisible's social action efforts. These factors developed from the thematic categories that surfaced through conceptual coding and analysis. The eight factors are:

(1) Committed community members and relationships kept participants involved; (2) Emotional engagement and passion led to sustained involvement; (3) Increased Consciousness was a factor for sustained involvement; (4) Participants stayed involved through a sense of duty; it was not an option to quit; (5) Participants stayed involved because they were motivated by the opposition; (6) Making a difference and thinking more was possible supported their commitment; (7) Feeling like the participant had a purpose or meaning kept participants involved; and (8) Having their identity change to be aligned with the work kept some participants involved. These factors are presented in the text with “SF” or “Sustaining factors,” and the number. A table of the findings with a comprehensive methodology and participant breakdown may be found in Appendix L.

Sustained involvement was more fully discussed in both the interviews and the focus groups. The CIQ was more useful when considering the learning and changes findings in Chapter 5. The number preceding “individual participants” and “percentage of all study participants” shows how many people indicated this factor in the overall study, and this number will always be a percentage from the total value of 55. It is possible that if the CIQ-only participants and the focus group participants were also interviewed, these factors for staying involved would have been identified as well.

Directly after the factors for sustained involvement, several sub-factors that helped to sustain involvement are discussed. The last part of this section includes the hindering factors, though the numbers are much lower for this category. This is a likely outcome, as the study population was primarily composed of participants involved for four or five-plus years.

Community Relationships and Emotional Engagement

Many participants stayed involved in Indivisible because of community relationships and emotional engagement. These included different kinds of communities, both with their individual

Indivisible groups, as well as additional community relationships that developed through activism work. In terms of emotional engagement, they developed ties to other group members and had shared empathy with other members over the course of being engaged in the work.

Table 12. Sustaining Factors of Community Relationships and Emotional Engagement

Sustaining Factor number	Code	Descriptor	CIQ %	Interview %	Focus Group %	Total % of study participants
SF1	SCGTE	Community members who were committed and relationships	44%	91%	50%	60%
SF2	SEE	Emotional engagement and passion for the work	22%	82%	0%	45%
Combined SF1+SF2	SCGTE + SEE	Community Relationships and Emotional Engagement	56%	100%	50%	69%

The first factor, “Committed community members and relationships kept participants involved,” will be addressed first. The second factor, “Emotional engagement and passion led to sustained involvement,” will be discussed directly afterwards. These factors are related, because the emotional connections were often forged with committed community members and new friends.

Committed Community Members and Relationships Kept Participants Involved

Study participants referenced committed community members and relationships with Indivisible members as important to staying involved over time. The word “commitment” included the acknowledgement of participants that other group members were giving their time, and they felt a responsibility to them to keep showing up. For other participants, this category included relationships less focused on mutual responsibility, and more on friendships or personal

appreciation of the other group members. They liked and valued the group members and wanted to see them; therefore, they made a point of scheduling their Indivisible participation into their lives. At its heart, this category was about people with connections: their bond. Participants kept showing up, at least partially, because of the people. With the interview population, 91% of those interviewed described this reason for staying involved in the interviews (n=20). With the focus group population, 50% described this reason for staying involved in the focus group (n=2). In the CIQs, 44% of participants described this reason for staying involved (n=24).

It could have been really easy, especially during COVID, even with Zoom to just sort of crawl under the bed covers, and just say, you know, I'm done. But you know, as you're asking the question, one of the things that comes to mind and what we're all touched on is that once you form a community, you are obligated to that community to show up. And there may have been a lot of times for me, or other people didn't say, I don't want to go to another march. I don't want to make another call. I don't want to do canvassing. But once you've said to people, I'm in this with you. To me, there's an obligation that I've felt, and I think a lot of other people do, to continue to be invested in that community. And that's kind of a vague answer, but I just think that we have formed such a bond, as a group and as individuals that we rely on each other to continue to do the work. (Participant 53, focus group)

This category includes participants inspired by other committed group members, by the energizing leadership in their smaller group communities, and then wanting to show up for those they admired. For some, the participants were drawn to others' dedication, and being able to collaborate with these participants was a highlight in doing the work. Participants described forging connections with like-minded people they never would have met otherwise; they really valued these ties and relationships. Some participants became close friends with their group members, continuing on with other social activities, starting texting groups, and relying on them for both Indivisible and non-Indivisible needs. Participant 26 mentioned members checking on her when she had COVID-19; the ties sometimes extended outside of activism-related tasks. This category includes people who liked to keep showing up to see people they enjoyed or admired, as well as people with whom they ended up being close friends.

I have to say that number one. I mean, it's both a sense of community, you know, the general word or the one word would be community. And community in terms of the individuals that I have found within the organization, but community and the number one is community with these young Dreamers. I cannot emphasize enough how important that has been. Personally, I know that we've given them money, but they've given me a lot more back. You know, it's it's, it's something that you know, they're my kids. That's how I see them. They're my kids, and it's beautiful. So, and I think that a number of them feel, you know, a certain kinship, and they certainly all have tremendous appreciation for what we're doing. (Participant 35, interview)

Participant 35 developed many close relationships with her core Indivisible group members, but her additional relationships with the Dreamer community members notably kept her showing up for programs supporting them. This involved helping them fill out paperwork, sourcing funding, and working with coalition members to figure out how to best support them. She then kept in touch with many of the Dreamers. The community relationships in the main Indivisible group, her immigration sub-group members, and the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) students, also known as Dreamers, were all community-specific relationship reasons for her ongoing engagement. Participant 35 felt ties to the non-affiliated people she met through her involvement with Indivisible, as well as feelings of loyalty and connection to members of her home Indivisible chapter. The world of people she knew and interacted with expanded because of her community connections forged through Indivisible.

Another motivation is I really admire these people who are working with me. You know, with the leaders of this group, even the folks that I thought were silly, who were involved in a large group of one of these subgroups, is this anti-militant group that I'm sure dates to the Vietnam War. Very old, absolute, diehard anti-militarists, like I think they even had some line on why we shouldn't somehow seek peace in Ukraine. Of course for sure, but they are really militant about this like way beyond me, and politically in my view, insane, because the one issue you do not want to put front and center taking on Trump was to come out as absolutely opposed to all the military establishment.... But I love those people. They're really dedicated.... I very much appreciate the people who I thought were critical for our country's survival. (Participant 51, Interview)

Participant 51 partially stayed involved with Indivisible because he was drawn to working with people who were not as 'like-minded' as some of the other participants mentioned

their group members were. There were those people in his Indivisible community as well, but he referenced anti-war participants who had been involved in activism for many years. While he did not think that their goals were necessarily realistic, he admired their dedication. He appreciated the work they had done toward improving outcomes for the country. The SF1 category includes different kinds of community: friendships, relationships, committed community members people would not necessarily have met otherwise, people participants admired, and people participants had tried to help. Community members kept participants coming back to Indivisible efforts.

Emotional Engagement and Passion Led to Sustained Involvement

For some participants, emotional engagement and passion were reasons they stayed involved in Indivisible initiatives. This involvement factor did not come up frequently throughout the CIQ responses, with 22% describing emotional engagement or passion for the work (n=12). When considering the interview transcripts along with those participants' CIQ responses, however, 82% described this as being a factor for staying involved (n=18). This factor did not come up during the focus group; one focus group participant mentioned it in their CIQ.

Some participants discussed having a range of emotions when they were involved in Indivisible. They used phrases such as “feeling overwhelmed,” “feeling humbled by support received,” “feeling devastated by the administration,” and “feeling hopeful for positive change.” Participants described having emotional reactions to the 2016 Election; similar to the literature, the sense of “shock” and “grief” was described by members of the interview population. Participants felt “fulfilled” and “passionate” about their work. Those who felt passionate liked being connected with others who had a sense of urgency around activism.

For some, Indivisible made them feel less alone. Through her involvement, Participant 19 wrote, “I feel less alone. I feel less helpless,” in her CIQ. Participation helped some feel less

depressed or hopeless. Participant 20 described feeling emotionally distraught due to the words and actions of the Trump administration, and wrote, “It is so gratifying to facilitate an event where people could feel connected and display their frustration, anger, and passion.” Another example of someone feeling better was Participant 37. He was having a difficult time in early 2017, and his local group gave him an opportunity to put his energy toward something positive.

I was spun out pretty bad, you know. And just you know, pretty angry, very angry and depressed. And I mean, it was, it was a really, really hard time. And of course, it wasn't just myself. It was so many people who I know and love, right? And so it was this cumulative kind of thing and just with the horror of the, all of the awful possibilities of what we were about to go through, was very overwhelming. And so Indivisible, you know, quite early on, gave me an outlet to put my energy, to channel my energy and my talents, whatever, to help organize and build something. To build a community that could be the resistance, basically. (Participant 37, Interview)

There were also participants who felt better because they had not previously been involved, and involvement could help with feelings of guilt. Their involvement had the potential to positively affect their sense of self. In her interview, Participant 59 described this:

For me, personally, it's been good emotionally and friendship. Why? Because I've always felt bad about not doing enough to fight fascism and so on. And so it's, it's helped me to feel good about myself about doing those things. And the friendships have been very valuable.... So personally, it's been really good for me.

Participant 59 gained emotional support through her involvement and also felt better about herself by taking an active role in what she identified as fighting fascism.

Participants also felt emotionally connected to other participants because of their shared goals and feelings of dedication. Emotional engagement was also fostered by people grateful to meet other like-minded people in a more conservative-leaning or ‘red’ area. Participant 45 felt connected to one of her group members as they worked on the same campaign; they worried together, they bonded, and they shared joy when they contributed toward a candidate’s win.

One of my Indivisible comrades became the campaign manager for my local rep and we canvassed together and met to strategize. I felt very connected to her and impressed by her amazing work and creativity in running this campaign. I felt very connected to her

because we were working toward the same goals and her ability to think outside the box wowed me. Our worry over the possibility of the candidates' loss and what that would mean bonded us and the ultimate win brought so much joy. So emotionality and working toward a common goal helped us be connected. (Participant 45, CIQ)

Indivisible group members working on common goals were able to bond over shared projects and things they cared about deeply. There were highs and lows; they went through these experiences together. Participants described being emotionally involved or engaged through the work, alongside other people with similar emotional connections to the work. It seemed an emotional need was met for some participants through their Indivisible involvement.

Consciousness, Duty, and the Opposition

Some participants stayed involved in Indivisible because of increased consciousness, a sense of duty, as well as concerns regarding the actions of opposition forces. With consciousness, once the participants became more aware, they determined they could not go back to their levels of limited to no involvement. As a result, they stayed committed to their work. In terms of types of "duty," this included having the sense that taking action was the right thing to do, having a strong belief system, or a conviction that it was not an option to quit. This finding is specific to values and beliefs when participants felt compelled to take action: too much was at stake. It relates to the third part of this finding, in which participants stayed involved because they were motivated by the opposition. The 'opposition' included the Trump administration, politicians using tactics locally, and putting or attempting to put into place policies that would adversely affect them or their community. This factor addresses participants concerned about the direction the United States was heading, and who felt they must be involved and take action to resist these changes. Their participation aligned with their value system or faith; it was not an option to quit.

Table 13. Sustaining Factors of Consciousness, Duty, and the Opposition

Sustaining Factor number	Code	Descriptor	CIQ %	Interview %	Focus Group %	Total % of study participants
SF3	SCC	Increased Consciousness	20%	73%	25%	42%
SF4	SSOD	Having a strong belief system, sense of duty, not an option to quit	31%	100%	75%	55%
SF5	SMNP	Motivated by the opposition	22%	95%	50%	49%
SF3, SF4 + SF5	SCC SSOD + SMNP	Consciousness, Duty, and the Opposition	45%	100%	100%	64%

The first factor “Increased consciousness was a factor for sustained involvement,” will be addressed first. The second factor, “Participants stayed involved through a sense of duty; it was not an option to quit,” will be addressed second. The third factor, “Participants stayed involved because they were motivated by the opposition,” will be discussed last. These factors or codes have been discussed together, since they often lined up.

Increased Consciousness was a Factor for Sustained Involvement

The majority of study participants who took part in an interview, after completing their CIQ, reported a reason for staying involved was an increased post-2016 election consciousness. With the interview population, 73% described this reason for staying involved (n=16). When including both their interview transcripts and their CIQ responses, 77% in at least one of the methodologies referenced increased consciousness (n=17). When considering just the CIQs, 11 participants (20% of the total study) discussed increased consciousness as a reason they stayed involved. It should be noted that the CIQ questions did not probe for this level of response. For

the entire study, 23 participants (42% of the study) identified this as a reason they stayed involved.

The kinds of consciousness included identifying the normalization of fascism, the perception that corruption was tolerated, deepening concerns about the direction of the country, and more. Some participants identified their worldview as transformed. They had gained a deeper understanding of issues such as privilege, racism, conditions for specific groups in the country, or a broader consciousness about the current state of affairs within politics.

Participant 32 concentrated on doing political outreach with diverse communities. She built relationships with different groups through direct outreach, built community, and learned about their concerns.

Before the relationship, you don't fully understand what their communities go through. You hear all these stories of police brutality, or this or that, but when they actually happened to people that you've become friends with.... I can share some stories, but I'll share one with my neighbor, because it happened most recently. She has a Muslim family, and their daughter is 16. She's adorable and she dresses in western clothes, but some of her friends wear the hijab. They were at a football game. And this is right across the street from where we live. And some nasty teenagers came up to the young lady with the hijab and threw some paint or something on her. And obviously she was very upset, and my friend came and picked them up, and cleaned her up. And the interesting thing was that the young girl that was targeted said, please don't tell my mom because I really want to go to another football game.... They learn these things from their parents. Nobody's born to hate. We're all babies and somebody has to teach you that this one isn't as good as you.... And maybe this has taught me to ask what it's taught me. It's taught me to understand what people go through, and it's not just a one off. It's happening every day, in every community of color, that a child or young adult or adult adult is a target of racism. (Participant 32, Interview)

Participant 32 cared deeply about the people she met, got to know, and supported; her awareness continued to be a reason why she made efforts to support affected groups in her community. This quote is part of a longer conversation in which the participant's experiences with people led her to multiple forms of direct action, hosting community members in her house, and participating with non-profit partners in order to support the people she grew to know well.

Participants worried that democratic principles were being eroded and came to the realization that voting alone was not enough. They could not rely on leaders or institutions in the same ways they had in the past. This category directly relates to an LF6, Increased consciousness in Chapter 5, as to what participants learned, and is also discussed in that section. This finding is focused on participants staying committed and involved because their eyes had been opened, they were aware, and they wanted to take action versus their prior, less engaged participation.

Participant 44 described becoming more conscious and aware by reading Stacey Abrams's 2020 book, *Our Time Is Now: Power, Purpose, and the Fight for a Fair America*. She explained how she had been afraid of violence, but the book changed her perspective.

In her book, Stacy Abrams talked about one of her grandparents being afraid of violence. But, they overcame the fear of violence because they did not have the luxury of staying afraid. If they stayed afraid and refrained from marching, their lives would never get better! Racial inequality would never go away. I learned that as a white person I had the privilege of NOT marching because I already had civil rights! So, I have learned a lot. I have become more dedicated to taking chances. (Participant 44, CIQ)

During the interview, she discussed how she became involved after having had a shift in her consciousness. Participant 44 joined many groups and became a year-round activist despite mobility and health issues. One example of her work was reaching out and encouraging people to run for school boards. Once engaged, she figured out ways to be and stay involved.

Participants Stayed Involved because of a Sense of Duty and Values; It was not an Option to Quit

A subset of study participants stayed involved because of a sense of duty; it was not an option to quit. All 22 of the interview participants (100% of the interview population) described feeling a sense of duty. When considering just the CIQs, 31% of the study participants (17 responses) partially attributed their commitment to their sense of duty. Seventy-five percent of the focus group participants (n=3) spoke to their conviction or sense of duty that they had to stay

involved. The hour one-on-one interview form may have afforded the time and opportunity for more participants to explain why they thought pro-democracy efforts were so important.

It's hard, but I've concluded that it's just not an option to quit. And I've kind of made that like it's become that cut and dried.... Like I just feel like it's my responsibility as a citizen to do more than just vote. And I'm just gonna keep doing, I'm just gonna keep doing what I can do until, you know, I can't. And so it's almost like I created a rule in my head. I'm a Capricorn and I like rules, so sometimes I just make the rules for myself, and then it's like, okay. You can't give up because the people fighting for civil rights didn't give up. They fought decades, you know, and those people are an inspiration. It's like, why do I think that just because we don't have the results we want in the four years that I've been, you know, paying attention. It's like, Who am I to give up now? (Participant 39, Interview)

Some participants referenced the civil rights movement, like Participant 39; others spoke of other injustices. Participants thought 2017-2020 was a significant period in history, and it was important that people became engaged in work to make the world a better, more democratic place. They cared about democracy, the future, and opportunities for future generations. They thought that maintaining democratic principles was vital to life in the United States.

I do have a strong sense of duty. And this country of course, I signed a blank check and said—You know I did it twice. I was in less than the first time and I came back in as an officer in the United States Army. So, you know, I just, I believe everything that I grew up believing about this country, and I've been in other parts of the world. And we're not, we're not perfect. But we are the United States of America. And then this community produced me. So, you know, I have that. It's an obligation and I'm not doing it begrudgingly. I love my state. I love my community. And somebody did it for me, years ago. (Participant 30, Interview)

Participant 30 had a love of country, and as such, she thought it was necessary to be involved when she disagreed with the direction that things were taking in the country and her state.

The participants described experiences in which duty or conviction was introduced. These included having a military background in their family, thinking the idea of children in cages was horrifying, growing up in a food insecure family, having previously been a nun, and having family or friends who would be negatively affected by policies put forward by the

administration. Participant 31 wanted to protect the most vulnerable members in society because of personal experience, which led to a sense of responsibility.

I—my family growing up was incredibly poor. So I have a natural inclination to like, look around a group and see who the disadvantaged people are. Right? I was the first person to go to college in my family, and I'm one of [redacted] cousins. And I'm in the middle. So I only went to college because some teacher said that I should. Yeah. So our family, we were poor, really poor. So I don't think my values have changed at all. I believe in Social Security, I believe in protecting the most vulnerable among us, because at one point I was the most vulnerable among us. You know what I mean? Like it's really important to me to keep the door open behind me. (Participant 31, Interview)

She was involved in Indivisible, as well as being concerned with how the Trump administration's stance on immigration would affect families and children, particularly at the southern border. Participant 31's experiences contributed to her sense of duty and her sustained involvement.

Participants wanted to support women's rights, civil rights, members of the LGBTQ communities, DACA recipients, people in diverse communities, followers of non-Christian religions, and more; they felt committed to the work. Indivisible's efforts were in line with their values.

I'd love to take a long break or just step back, too, but it's not an option. To me, that was the lesson of 2016: you can't leave protecting your country up to others unless you want to lose it. (Participant 38, Interview)

Like Participant 38, some participants indicated that they wished it was not necessary, but being involved was non-negotiable because of what was at stake. This thematic category included participants who thought being involved was the right thing to do, it was their duty, or it was aligned with their values or beliefs. As a result, it was not an option for them to quit.

Participants Stayed Involved because They were Motivated by the Opposition

Study participants described being motivated to stay involved in their Indivisible efforts because of the opposition. This included being opposed to actions of the Trump administration,

policies they thought were negative, and politicians they felt were undemocratic or not serving the needs of the people. A direct question was not asked about sustained involvement in the CIQs and was only included when participants included it in their reflections. This factor was only referenced in 22% of CIQ responses. With the interview population, 21 interview participants (95% of interview participants) described this factor for staying involved. With the focus group population, 3 participants (75%) described this reason for staying involved. In consideration of all the study participants, 27 participants, or 49% of the study, described this reason for staying involved over time.

This thematic category included participants who were motivated to be involved because of oppositional political forces. This often started with mention of Donald Trump or the Trump administration. Participant 36 discussed how a specific politician was vulgar, a narcissist, and possibly a sociopath. She did not think the opposition would foster a healthy environment or lead by positive example. She was motivated to keep participating because “to have him as the head of state was embarrassing, at the very least, and dangerous and outrageous.”

Well, yeah, the first couple of years, really the first four years, I was animated by anti-Trump. I mean, all of us were. There was no point that being appalled by him got any less. Everything he did, everything he said kept us up in very, very firm opposition, and motivated us to do whatever we had to do. There was at no point that we felt that it was any less dire. (Participant 36, (Interview)

Yeah, I mean, well, you just look at you look at how many people have died because of Trump. I mean, a lot of people died because of George W. Bush too, but the number of people who have died because of Trump, from guns, from disruption of the social safety net, from COVID. I mean, yes, it was probably about 300,000 people who died because of what the Republican Party did regarding COVID. So, and I genuinely believe that the Republican Party is now a fascist party, that if they take power, they will put institutional changes in place that mean there is no longer a democracy in this country. (Participant 47, Interview)

Participant 47 spoke to the impact of the Trump administration; it was not just one person the participants were opposed to in their sustained involvement. There were participants who

were concerned about racism and fascism. In addition to the actions of Trump himself, child separation, the Affordable Care Act being at risk, the “Muslim ban,” reproductive rights, and proposed and actual policies that would negatively impact marginalized groups were discussed by study participants. Oftentimes the initial participation started with Trump, but then there were other oppositional forces that kept them showing up.

During the Trump administration, I was motivated every single day because my goal was to make sure he was a one-term president. And we did accomplish that. But what was disappointing is that even with the Democrats winning pretty much everything, we still had so many battles to fight, you know. And when Roe v Wade was overturned, it was just like seconds. It was just like somebody punched you in the gut, you know, and again we all kind of expected it. But you still had to ... then you were like, we can't let these people get away with this. So then it sort of got us all geared up again, for this midterm election to say no no no no no no. You're not gonna get away with this. And so, yeah, I think, you know, just current events keep you motivated. You know, it's just like there's every day you wake up and you're like, Okay, what's gonna make it? What's gonna get me motivated today? And it's, and it never seems to end. (Participant 33, Interview)

Participant 33 references a series of battles participants had to fight. While participants had expected these challenges, the ongoing current events were reasons participants continued to stay motivated. It was not just Trump, but the other politicians who wanted to carry on his work.

Participant 30 was worried about how education had become worse in her state and wanted to fight the cost-cutting public education goals of the opposition. Participant 31 was worried about the goals of politicians who wanted to deport Dreamers. This was personal: her son attended college with some Dreamers. Participant 32 directly referenced racism that had occurred locally, both with Black children and Muslim children, and thought the administration would make things worse for both groups. This category includes participants who referenced specific politicians, the stated goals of the politicians and their administrations, their concerns for the welfare of adversely affected groups, and how they could suffer under ‘the opposition.’

Making a Difference, Purpose, and Identity

Some participants stayed involved with Indivisible activities because they recognized they were part of a difference, they found meaning or purpose in the work, and it started to become part of their identity. All of the interview participants stayed involved with Indivisible initiatives due to at least one of these factors. A more detailed breakdown may be found in Appendix L, with a preliminary view in the table below.

Table 14. Sustaining Factors of Making a Difference, Purpose, and Identity

Sustaining Factor number	Code	Descriptor	CIQ %	Interview %	Focus Group %	Total % of study participants
SF6	SMDMP	Making a difference and thinking more was possible	42%	86%	50%	67%
SF7	SFPM	Feeling like they had a purpose or meaning	16%	50%	50%	36%
SF8	SICAW	Having their identity change to be aligned	20%	23%	0%	25%
SF6, SF7 +SF8	SMDMP, SFPM + SICAW	Making a difference, purpose and identity	56%	95%	75%	73%

Making a Difference and Thinking More was Possible Supported Their Commitment

Study participants described that making a difference and thinking more was possible were factors that supported their commitment. Their initial successes, and the resulting belief they could do more, was one of the reasons new activists stayed involved with Indivisible. Study participants described this experience, with 37 individual participants (67% of the study participants) describing this experience and belief. With the interview population, 19 interview participants (86% of interview participants) described this belief; across the CIQs and interviews,

20 interview participants (91% of interview participants) also described this reason for staying involved. With the focus group population, 50% described this factor (n=2), and including both their CIQs and focus group participation, 100% of focus group participants described this factor (n=4). In consideration of just the CIQs, 42% described this reason for staying involved (n=23).

This category involves participants who had some success with their initiatives—or identified other successes in the realm of social action—and started to think more was possible. This belief that they were a part of positive movement or change in the country, and more could be accomplished, was a reason why participants continued to stay involved. The participants believed in the power of ordinary citizens to be able to enact change. When they had some success or saw the impact that Indivisible—and other groups—had with social action initiatives, this strengthened their resolve for wanting to be part of more change. In some respects, this category represents a belief that more could happen if everyone continued to band together.

The other thing is that I, I used to be so cynical that we couldn't make a difference. And now I know, actually, we can. It may be small, it may be almost imperceptible, but the fact of the matter is that each one of us can change the world. But one of the key ways to do it is to find other people that you can work with that, that you can work with to make those changes. (Participant 33, Interview)

Participant 33 questioned if their work would make an impact. She did not necessarily believe they would make a difference when she first joined Indivisible, but she wanted to do something and liked the community. Through her involvement and the actions of her group, she and others started to see change occur. Even if change was small, their act of involvement led participants to understand the role of their work, and how their engagement and contributions added value. This category represents more than a belief in oneself; it represents the belief that their combined time and energy had been well spent, and if more was expended, more would be possible.

Some of the accomplishments participants included were helping to flip their state senate, getting the name of their Indivisible group known, putting the opposition in a defensive mode by

having to spend more money to defeat and contest them, and letting people in their communities know they supported them and they were not alone. Accomplishments the study participants listed: they raised large amounts of money for DACA renewals, had the biggest turnout of voters in their county, helped save the ACA, helped to defeat “MAGA candidates” (Make America Great Again was Trump’s 2016 campaign slogan and became known as the name of the political movement), flipped their congressional district seat, had 500 people sign up for their newsletter, planned a successful town hall, and held a giant rally at their state capitol. The participants helped to foster political engagement, impact policy, educate their neighbors, and elect their preferred candidates. The successes could be attributable to many; they saw their own role as valuable to making a difference, and by staying involved, more was possible.

Feeling Like the Participant Had a Purpose or Meaning Kept Participants Involved

Some participants stayed involved because they felt they had a purpose or found meaning through their involvement. In consideration of the full study population, 36% of the participants described having found a purpose or meaning in their involvement (n=9). This factor only came up in 16% of the CIQ responses (n=9); however, 50% of the interview transcripts (n=11) referenced this factor. When considering the focus group participants’ transcripts and CIQ responses, 75% referenced having found meaning or a purpose through their involvement (n=3).

Participants described feeling regret for not having previously been involved in activism work. They expressed the feeling of meaning in having found purpose as more active agents, supporting causes they believed in, and fighting the continuing challenges from the administration. Participant 44 found purpose in being involved in texting campaigns. “I just feel like it’s my calling right now. You know, even if I can only do it one hour a day, or a couple hours a week. I feel like I have an impact” (Participant 44, Interview).

It felt good to be involved, to feel like they were part of a solution, rather than sit back, and from their view, have conditions in the country become worse. Some participants felt purpose by using their skills and abilities to add value to Indivisible and to be involved in pro-democracy efforts. They had a role they could fulfill. Other people promoted cultural understanding and voter engagement. Participants used their proximal privilege to stand up for people facing racism. They registered voters, educated community members about candidates, and advocated for issues like in-state tuition for DACA students. They had a sense of purpose and pride in their involvement and continued to strive for positive change in their community.

I moved to “blue” [redacted Midwest city] and found my purpose. Trump became President and I could no longer leave this work up to others. I worked with Women’s March [redacted] for a short time but it didn’t feel right. I attended a meeting for Indivisible and found my place. It has changed my life. I’m now the co-leader of our group. I have made wonderful friends and I know we are making a difference.
(Participant 33, CIQ)

Participant 33 knew that there was a reason for being involved and found her purpose in trying to change the direction of the country. She had not previously anticipated being involved in this work, but once she became involved, she found purpose in the work and community.

This category included the purpose found in taking action to make the country a better place, as well as appreciation of the meaningful connections they developed with other Indivisible members. Participant 50 described their involvement as having been “one of the most important experiences of my life.” They were doing something and changing their understanding of what they were capable of accomplishing. In her CIQ, Participant 34 wrote, “I also felt a purpose in doing what I could to help our state and elect good candidates for the benefit of all.” This purpose made their efforts feel worth the time and energy expended by staying involved. Some participants, like Participant 42, had advanced skills around collecting and processing data and analyzed large amounts of information around electoral predictions. He described how he

contributed his expertise and found purpose when helping various groups around his state. Participants understood that their contributions, even if small, helped make a tangible contribution to building democratic power in the country during the 2017-2020 period.

Having Their Identity Change to be Aligned with the Work Kept Some Participants Involved

Some participants described having their identity change to be aligned with the work. This category looked different depending on the participant, and was sometimes as explicit as reporting that their identity had changed and they now saw themselves as an activist. Other times it was subtler and was in a discussion of how work had changed the participant's life in terms of what they valued and how they chose to spend their time. People in their lives knew that this kind of work had become a part of them. This category included now viewing themselves as activists, remarking that their identity had shifted as a result of their involvement in the work, or describing how their Indivisible involvement had become a core part of their identity. This was sometimes of a title or responsibility they took on, or seeing themselves as someone who participates in this activity or group, the same way someone might describe themselves as vegan, a lover of bluegrass, or a weightlifter. For the total study population, 25% of the study described having their identity change to be aligned with the work (n=14). When considering the interview transcripts along with these participants' CIQ responses, 45% of the interview population noted this change (n=10). Identity did not come up in the focus group discussion, nor did it occur in these participants' CIQ responses. This factor was not prevalent throughout the CIQs; given the varying length of descriptions and study prompts, this is not surprising. Some participants were actively involved throughout the entire 2017-2020 period, without wanting to identify themselves as activists.

Several individuals discussed their experiences with activism and political engagement, highlighting how it transformed their lives. They had become politically educated and identified that they had a breadth of knowledge about the work of Indivisible chapters. They were proud of their work and had developed capabilities around activism activities. Participant 36's role as a group leader started to become part of her identity. She used her writing skills to communicate complex information to others; she recognized that her ability to inform was making a difference.

I had never been politically engaged in my life before, and leading a very large Indivisible group soon became almost a defining identity. My Indivisible involvement also led to my coming a PC for the local Democratic party. I discovered I have considerable skill in communicating complex political realities to lay people. I've always been a good writer, but never before has my writing made such a difference to so many people. (Participant 36, CIQ)

Some participants self-identified as "activists" and were part of a community with other activists who identified in the same way. Their roles in activism and Indivisible became a part of who they were, what they cared about, and what they did with their time.

We have a text group called "Activist." It began as a lark when [redacted] added all of her friends who were Activists and another woman who was her friend. [Redacted] named it the "Activists." We keep in touch all day, citing links to articles, current information that we should all know, and support if one of us has a problem. We "joke" that if something happens to one of us, it happens to all of us. We celebrate birthdays together, which is always a task, since it is impossible for eight activists to find an available date. (Participant 3, CIQ)

Through this described and stated identity, the participants were committed to activism and found it important to stay involved in pro-democratic activities. People also developed senses of identity through their roles in their Indivisible chapters. This sometimes occurred when they had leadership positions, and other group members knew them for their contributions. Some roles included being a group leader, co-group leader, social media manager, newsletter editor, or

lead contact for a sub-group. Their ability to wear distinct and different roles in Indivisible and coalition groups offered them new senses of identity and presented future possibilities.

Sustained Involvement: Seven Sub-factors that Helped Participants Keep Showing Up

Several sub-factors helped sustain participants' involvements. They were not their core reasons for sustained involvement; instead, they were sub-factors or 'boosters' that helped to encourage involvement despite challenges: (1) It helped when participants had things they continued to want to be a part of or accomplish; (2) Participants felt appreciated and received validation; (3) Indivisible's flexible format helped participants make it work for their interests and contexts; (4) Supportive family members and friends helped participants stay involved; (5) Hope helped participants stay involved, and elections (which create hope); (6) It helped to recognize they are one person among many, and every bit counts; and (7) Taking breaks from work and technology helped activists stay involved. These sustaining sub-factors are represented by "SI" in the text or "Sustaining involvement."

These sub-factors were not well-represented across the CIQ responses; the highest percentage of the total study CIQ responses is 16% for SFLX, with some in as few as 2 CIQs. These sub-factors largely emerged from the interview responses. Sub-factor 4, specific to supportive family members and friends being helpful to sustained involvement, was described in 86% of the interviews (n=19). More will be described in the subsequent subsections, and the participant quotes offer a fuller sense of each category.

Table 15. Sustaining Involvement Subfactors 1-7

Sustaining Involvement subfactor number	Code	Descriptor	CIQ %	Interview %	Total % of study participants
SI1	SCON	Continue to be things a participant wants to be a part of or accomplish	9%	41%	24%
SI2	SFA	Participants felt appreciated and received validation	15%	18%	22%
SI3	SFLX	Indivisible’s flexible format	16%	55%	40%
SI4	SSFF	Supportive family members and friends	7%	86%	40%
SI5	SMHAE	Motivated by hope, and elections (which create hope)	4%	36%	18%
SI6	SREC	It helps to recognize they are one person among many, they can’t do everything.	13%	45%	31%
SI7	STTW	Taking breaks from the work and technology	7%	23%	18%
SI 1-7	Combined	Combined sustaining subfactors	47%	100%	71%

It Helped When Participants Had Things They Continued to Want to be a Part of or Accomplish

Some participants described activism goals, or Indivisible initiatives, they wanted to be a part of in the future. For them, being forward-thinking and having projects to keep them coming back helped them stay involved. This sub-factor did not come up frequently throughout the CIQ responses, with 9% of participants describing having things they wanted to accomplish or things they would like to be a part of in the future (n=5). When considering the interview transcripts along with those participants’ CIQ responses, however, 45% of the interviewees described their interests in future activism-related projects (n=10). This sub-factor was not mentioned during the focus group; one focus group participant included it in her CIQ. This thematic category was

about looking forward, and it included a variety of reasons that a participant would keep coming back. They had more that they wanted to be involved with or accomplish.

While some of the participants related the challenges involved in the work, they also described how it was long-term, and they were determined to see projects and initiatives through. Participant 11 wrote in her CIQ, “I see our work going forward as statewide organizing, including rural, and continuing to name & shame legislators—with the goal of increasing down-ballot voting in 2024. We continue to evolve.” She described having a united leadership team on-board with the coming agenda, and how their dependable volunteers had expanded their reach. Participant 11 was considering both the work the group wanted to do and the resources they needed to accomplish them. Some participants had other activism areas of interest beyond Indivisible. Participant 42 had several things he was looking to accomplish in the coming year, short-term, but most immediately reported that he was encouraging everyone to phonebank for a Senatorial candidate. He had longer-term things he wanted to accomplish. Sometimes the participants’ plans for future participation in social action were not specifically with Indivisible, even if they were planning on staying involved in some capacity. “I decided for 2024 to put most of my volunteer hours with Movement Labs. They textbank every month, every year, whether it is election year or not!” (Participant 44). Participant 44 was interested in how to participate throughout the year; it did not have to be limited to leading up to an election. Her interview was in late 2022, and she was already planning then for how to make an impact on the 2024 elections. The sub-factor of having things that a participant would like to continue to be involved in or accomplish (e.g., turning a seat ‘blue’) helped some participants sustain their involvement.

Participants Felt Appreciated and Received Validation

One sub-factor that facilitated Indivisible involvement, identified by the participants, was feeling appreciated and valued by other group members. This did not come up frequently in the CIQ responses, with 15% of participants describing feeling appreciated by group members (n=8). When considering the interview transcripts along with those participants' CIQ responses, 27% of the interview population described this sub-factor (n=6). One focus group participant mentioned this in the group discussion. This external validation was not significant to the majority of study participants: 22% of the total study referred to this sub-factor (n=12).

This sub-factor included different forms of appreciation or validation, including receiving positive feedback for their contributions. Some participants' group members opened up their cultivated emails and shared them with other people in their lives. Others received compliments on their writing or ways of synthesizing information. Participant 36 liked being able to share her English major background with the group. She described not having had an audience in the past, and with her role, she was able to share her writing and help others, which was validating.

I was an English major. So I've always been a good writer. Anybody who knows me, that's what I did. When we traveled, I did our travel blogs on Facebook. Everyone loved it. So I've always had the gift of writing, but I've never had an audience. And I think that's one of the things that really has kept me going.... This is a whole bunch of people who not only like it, but are helped by it. It is very validating and that keeps you going. (Participant 36, Interview)

This category includes participants feeling their group members recognized them as an important part of the collective work. As part of a group, working toward general goals, they felt the appreciation and recognition for adding value. One participant (in CIQ29), critical of past work and academic environments, appreciated the Indivisible leadership valuing the experience and knowledge from the chapter communities. Indivisible leadership valued her feedback regarding anti-racist curriculum she had utilized; feeling appreciated in this way helped her want

to stay involved. Sometimes the value a group member added was not a specific talent; it could be a good sense of humor, appreciation for being reliable, showing up, helping out with whatever is needed, whether a postcarding project or a voter registration event. Participants described members sharing their admiration for each other's contributions. Sometimes they received thank you notes and holiday cards from people they had worked with or from candidates they had supported. Other times the recognition or appreciation was reinforced by external people as well, and participants were thanked for what they were doing; people valued the work they were doing. The validation and appreciation was a motivating force for some to keep going. Some participants reported liking and valuing the recognition they received for their contributions.

Indivisible's Flexible Format Helped Participants Make it Work for Their Interests and Contexts

One factor that helped sustain some participants' involvement was Indivisible's flexible format. They discussed the importance of finding work that was a fit for them, their context, and their interests. This involvement factor did not come up frequently throughout the CIQ responses, with 16% describing the flexible format making it possible to stay involved (n=9). When considering the interview transcripts along with those participants' CIQ responses, 73% of the population described this as being a helpful factor for staying involved (n=16). This factor was discussed by 75% of the participants in the focus group discussion (n=3).

Flexible format meant different things to different participants in the study, but at its essence, it meant that the participants could make decisions and adapt the focus and activities of their group. The requirements for meetings, involvement, activities, membership, format, size, leadership titles, or operations were not mandated. For the participants who referenced this, the grassroots nature of the organization was emphasized. It was really about their groups, what they wanted to do, and how they wanted to set up programs. Of course, there was a broader

affiliation, but in talking to the participants, it became apparent that different groups looked very different. Even if two people were in the same group, their involvement could vary depending on their interest area, functional team, committee, or leadership status. This often varied for participants over the course of their described involvement over time, especially as they gained experience.

Participant 38 described liking to write, interview, and communicate with people. He had the flexibility to set up a program that involved being in conversation with politicians and directly working with the staff members in representatives' offices. Participant 38 was able to meet with one of his Senator's staff members and explain what was important to his group. He was not siloed to a specific role or restricted by what would be allowed to do as a programming option. Along with his group members, Participant 38 pursued what fit for him, and he had agency. This looser structure worked; he had broad professional experience and was intrinsically motivated. He recognized that the amount someone cares about what they are doing is important. Participants described liking being able to pick and choose the actions to take, where they and their group would place their energy, and what would or would not be a fit for their preferences.

I feel like a lot of the flexibility is that it's not an explicitly ideological or partisan organization. So there are people who are very involved with a group who are very focused on civic education. Some are focused on housing. Some are focused on just a variety of different issues. But there's a real absence of you know, are you a true believer? I think, at least for me, in groups that I've been in. You know, it's like an environmental group, and you have to believe that the environmental issues are the most important issue that anybody faces. Which may be true, but it's just keeping that faith and the party line, I think can drive people away. Where I've just found that there's such a kind of, a real focus on tactics. Even though most of the people I work closely with, I think, are very far left people, most of the things we do are very ... you wouldn't even know that they were partisan, you know. We do literature drops for like, low propensity voters. And it's really just telling them how to vote. Nobody gets in fights about whether that's into the revolution, you know, it's just, it's the tactic. And I feel like that's kept me from burning out, you know, if I get tired of doing one thing, there's always something else to do, you know, and some of its online and some of its in person and some of its, you know, making things and there's a variety. (Participant 52, Focus group)

Participant 52 thought that Indivisible could be a place for participants with a variety of interests and beliefs, and they would not have the barrier to entry as would a more partisan group. In the focus group, she also described the kinds of activities they were involved with, such as literature drops or writing postcards. There was more than enough work with different kinds of associated tasks, so participants could make it work for their chapter.

They benefited from being part of Indivisible, being able to use the Indivisible name and affiliation to attain meetings, and to be taken seriously as they decided how to concentrate their efforts. Participant 36 had another civic engagement role in her community, and in that role, she could not endorse candidates, “whereas in Indivisible, I can say whatever I want. So I tend to put the Indivisible hat on more than I put the [redacted] hat on.” She did not have to choose between Indivisible and her other position; instead she could use the affiliation for purposes that served her activism goals. There were fewer restrictions about what it meant to be a part of Indivisible.

So I learned, as I got into leadership positions, that you don’t lead by dictating anything, especially with [redacted]. And so you have to develop a number of different skill sets about how to recruit and retain people in your organization. And so that helped me in terms of trying to understand. I mean what you’re all talking about is fascinating in terms of beginning with sort of like trying to bring people in on an issue basis. And that didn’t work really well for us. Okay, so we had to shift to more like ... functional teams. They have a team from social media, we have a team for dogging the Legislature team for one thing or another. So you know, working in complex organizations, you develop a perspective that you have to be flexible. You have to live to listen to your constituents if you want them to stay engaged with you. And you can’t make anybody do anything you know, so that helped me, because again, it’s an all volunteer group. And you have to figure out ways to keep people engaged. Like, you know, a lot of people don’t want to canvas but we have 100 people who want to write postcards. Okay, that may not be the most effective get out the vote strategy, but that’s what people will do. So we’ll support that kind of activity. (Participant 53, Focus group)

Participant 53 used prior experience and knowledge of retention in organizations to keep volunteers in her group engaged. Participants described how having different kinds of involvement to offer their group members helped keep them showing up. This included creating functional teams, being flexible, making civic engagement easy and fun, and accepting

everyone's level of involvement—even if it ebbed and flowed. The participants were able to organize their group based on their members' interest areas, prioritize how best to get work done, and even pursue their own special interests within the Indivisible chapter, as long as there was a reasonable connection. For the participants who stayed involved over time, being able to control what they pursued on a regular basis helped them maintain involvement. A more rigid format might not have worked for their specific community group members. Depending on the chapter, some groups focused on specific topics or efforts; because Indivisible was broad enough, they could participate in national, state, and local pro-democracy and civic engagement activities.

Supportive Family Members and Friends Helped Participants Stay Involved

Participants reported that having supportive family or friends helped as an involvement factor in only 7% of the CIQ responses (n=4). When considering the interview transcripts along with those participants' CIQs, however, 86% of the interview population reported this sub-factor (n=19). This factor did not come up in the focus group discussion; one focus group participant mentioned it in their CIQ response. Forty percent of the total study population reported they had supportive family members and friends, relative to their Indivisible efforts (n=22).

The ways family members or friends were supportive took on different forms. For some, family members took on more of the participants' home and family responsibilities, being generally helpful when they worked on Indivisible projects. Sometimes it was emotional support, belief in them, or belief in what they were doing. Some participants' spouses or partners became involved in the work, also helping participants stay involved. Because Indivisible and social action activities could take several hours a week, depending on the season, this extra support or validation from close people was a facilitating factor to staying involved. Participant 3 wrote in her CIQ that her husband's support was a positive factor for her to stay involved for 5+ years.

She had taken on a leadership role in her Indivisible group, in addition to other social action or civic engagement work since 2017. Participant 33 reported a supportive partner who became involved in the work when the group needed help. He was not involved at her level; whenever the group could benefit from his expertise, she could rely on him to support her.

My partner [redacted] is incredibly supportive, and he helps us out a lot actually. He's a good volunteer, and works with us very closely. He actually has a media background. So he helps us with things when we need to get out a press release or contact the media or figure out how we're going to frame our message. He jumps in and helps us with all of that, so he's been awesome. Most of my family is quite supportive of it. (Participant 33)

Participant 42 sometimes spent hours a day on Indivisible projects; he had a supportive wife and asked for her help. She had been looking for something to become involved in, accepted the challenge to work outside her area of expertise, and took on additional work that employed her people skills. Participant 42 and his wife both have taken on leadership roles with Indivisible. He had been involved for 5+ years at the time of the interview.

So we needed a treasurer, and we had a treasurer, and we had three or four of them. And the last one finally dropped out. So I asked my wife if she could take over, and she's absolutely not a numbers person. You know, she's a psychologist, but she does it... [Then] I asked if my wife would sit in for me for this one little fundraiser and she got involved. And, of course, it took a lot of time. And then this year, they had a lot of money and effort, and were raising funds to put canvassers on the ground in this district as well, as the election approached. Sending get out to vote people down to campus, and getting people to vote. And now currently ballot curing. They were arranging for stipends, hotel rooms, gas, money, and so on and so forth. So my wife got involved with coordinating all of these people, like someone was going to volunteer to drive down, make sure that they got gas money, if they needed a room to stay in, make sure they got the room, a stipend for food, and so on and so forth. So that became her full time job. She is good at working with people. (Participant 42, Interview)

Some participants thought it was easier to stay involved in activism because of their supportive family and friends.

My husband's 100% support probably made it easier for me. He is supportive, helpful, and brags about my accomplishments. He knows how much doing this work means to me. (Participant 3, CIQ)

Some participants were able to teach friends new information they learned about civic engagement and tell them about candidates whose platforms they thought would represent their values. For some, this information was well-received. Some participants received thanks from friends for being involved and doing this work, and one participant's children thought it was 'cool' that they had become involved with Indivisible initiatives. This category included a range of family and friends providing emotional support or approval, helping in other capacities or projects when needed, and becoming more directly involved at times.

Hope Helped Participants Stay Involved, and Elections (which Create Hope)

A smaller study population reported being motivated to stay involved by hope, and elections—which create hope. This factor only came up in 4% of the study CIQs (n=2). The CIQ questions did not directly ask about sustained involvement; it is possible if there had been a fifth question about sustained involvement, this sub-factor would have been written about by participants. When considering the interview transcripts, along with their CIQ responses, 41% of the interview population described this as something that helped them stay involved (n=9). This sub-factor was introduced by one participant in the focus group discussion.

This code originated from one of the first interviews. Hope was identified as helping sustain their involvement. Several participants tied hope to elections, as there was a chance for change, a different reality. For others, they felt hopeful when they met other like-minded people who cared about the same things as them.

I just kept meeting people, because if you just watch the media you think everybody is like ... you know what I mean. Like this red wave that was gonna happen. That people were more interested in their 401Ks, and there were children in cages. And I just kept meeting people who were also interested in the children in cages. You know what I mean? Who cared more about that than they did about the price of gas. So I think over time, I just kept meeting more and more people. And that kept giving me hope. And then there's always because of elections, there's always the hope. The next time, you know what I mean? Like okay, we lost this guy this time. So now what are we going to do, so

that in 2024 we get a representative who represents us? Like you know what I mean, who really represents us. Yeah, that's it. There just keeps being hope. (Participant 31, Interview)

Participant 31 found hope in different ways. She found people who thought that what was going on was not right and had similar values to her, so she was not alone. Having others care about the same issues gave her hope. Elections represent a before and after point; for some participants, there was hope with every election that things could improve. Participant 34 also found hope with every election and remarked on the difference that had just been made with the midterm election in November 2022. Some participants described feeling energized and hopeful in the buildup to an election. Having that hope helped them focus and accomplish their work. In his CIQ response, Participant 37 reported that Indivisible, the organization itself, had given him hope: "Since the beginning, Indivisible has continued to instill in me a hope that at times has been hard to find, and a call to action the result of which has been profound in my life."

This thematic category includes participants who felt hope in the context of their Indivisible work. They felt hopeful in community with others who cared like them, they felt hopeful things could be better in the future, and they felt hopeful with an election.

It Helped to Recognize They are One Person among Many, and Every Bit Counts

Some participants described recognizing they were one person among many, and every bit counted. They realized they could not do everything, and they would have to choose and focus. Participants accepted that they were contributing and their involvement helped. This belief or perspective sub-factor helped sustain their involvement. This was referenced in 13% of CIQ responses (n=7). With the interview population, 45% described this sub-factor as helping them stay involved (n=10). It was introduced in the focus group discussion by one participant. In consideration of all the study participants, 31% of the study reported this sub-factor (n=17).

Some participants felt overwhelmed by concerns prior to involvement. By joining a group, participants realized they would not need to solve everything by themselves. There could be a manageable amount of work or activities as one person; they could be engaged and aware of what others were also doing. Participant 47 described how their group's organizational framework helped members support and rely on each other. Each person balanced what they could do at the time. This helped prevent some feelings of being overwhelmed or burning out.

I really do like the snowflake model where you try to, you basically do what people actually want to do.... And then you know, so we've tried to keep a culture where we expect people to do what you can do, do what you love, do not feel that you have to do everything, because I think that's what brings people out.... It's like, you know, do not feel you have to do everything.... Trump is going to be attacking us on so many different fronts. We're going to go crazy if we have to deal with all the different horrible things he's going to do, so what we have to do is divide and conquer, you know. I care about immigration, I care about health, I care about the environment, but I can't be thinking about all of those. So what I have to do is, I have to trust that you are going to do all the research about immigration, you're going to do all the research about health care, and if you need me to make a phone call, you need me to show up, tell me. I will be there.... And I can focus on climate change ... you don't have to carry the weight of the environment in your head. We have to trust each other. So I think that kind of approach helps a lot with the burnout. (Participant 47, Interview)

As Participant 47 noted, when participants focused on what they cared about, it was more likely to get done. They could have other people join them, they could ask for help, and they could also understand that other group members were dedicated to other important areas. The participants let themselves be involved in smaller or larger ways depending on their bandwidth, and participants who sustained involvement did not have to be operating at full capacity the whole time.

I have learned that each of us really can make a difference. Everything matters. Each door knocked. Each postcard written. Each person who attends a rally. Every yard sign and every donation. It all matters. Never think you can't make a difference. (Participant 33, CIQ)

Participants would relate that “it takes a village,” and their contributions mattered: every bit counted. This sub-factor represented having a broader perspective about how all the work mattered; they were part of something greater, and no one person had to do it all.

Taking Breaks from the Work and Technology Helped Activists Stay Involved

Some study participants reported that it helped to take breaks from the work; take breaks from technology, news, and social media; and stay engaged in other life activities. This factor was referenced in 7% of CIQ responses (n=4). When considering the interview transcripts along with those participants’ CIQ responses, 27% of the interview population described taking breaks as being helpful for their sustained involvement (n=6). With the focus group population, 50% of the focus group participants described this reason for staying involved across the focus group and their CIQ responses (n=2). For the study population overall, 18% of the study participants reported taking breaks as being helpful to them staying involved and avoiding burnout (n=10).

These breaks included taking regular time for exercise or physical activity to spend time outside in nature. Sometimes taking these breaks helped them solve a problem with their Indivisible work; stepping away could provide the time and space to look at a problem differently. While Participant 42 had set aside a hobby to focus additional time on his activism, he did make regular time to go on walks.

The way my mind works is, things tend to muddle around. And if I just sit at the computer screen and bang my head, I guess and try to solve something, it never works. But if I go for a walk, somehow little ideas pop up with different approaches and whatnot. And a lot of times I’ll come back and have a better approach or a better solution. (Participant 42, Interview)

In addition to walks, some participants referenced dedicated swimming time, exercising at the gym, playing music, playing basketball, or going to the comedy club every weekend. Those participants scheduled their time so the activism did not take away from the other things they enjoyed recreationally or cared about in their lives. Some longer breaks, like travel, helped

by getting away and unplugging from their activism work. Some participants talked about taking breaks from technology or social media, like Twitter, Facebook, or the 24-hour news cycle.

We also have worked in, or tried to have worked in taking part of the summer off when this local state legislature isn't in session. Just giving a break there, unless something crazy in the world happens. And then, you know, over the holidays, we tried to give people some time off to just not be so stressed out about things. (Participant 55, Focus group)

Participant 55 referenced specific teams or groups that took seasonal activism breaks, and built in breaks to their teams. For some groups, these breaks were tied to their focus area. Even if the Indivisible meetings were on break during the summer or around the holidays, participants continued to stay in touch with each other by text or email.

Hindered Involvement: Three Factors that Could Limit Involvement

The three thematic categories that hindered participants' involvement were: (1) Burnout, (2) Group dynamics or issues with group members, and (3) Disagreement with values or approaches. These subject factors developed from the recent literature on activism (Cahill & Mould, 2018; Chen & Gorsky, 2015; Logan et al., 2017; Skocpol, 2021; Stockman, 2018). These factors were not significant enough to keep the participants from their involvement; that is likely due to the study including participants with two or more years of activism with Indivisible. The sub-factors hindering involvement across the CIQ responses ranged from 22% for disagreements with values or approaches to 16% for group dynamics or issues with group members to 11% for burnout. These sub-factors were discussed more in the interviews and focus group, with Hindering Factor 1, Burnout, discussed in 59% of the interviews (n=13).

Table 16. Hindering Involvement Factors

Hindering Involvement (HI)	Code	Descriptor	CIQ %	Interview %	Focus Group %	Total % of participants
HI1	DBNT	Burnout, felt overwhelmed and duties exceeded energy or capacity	11%	59%	75%	36%
HI2	DGD	Group dynamics or issues with group members	16%	23%	25%	20%
HI3	DVA	Disagreement with values, approaches	22%	32%	50%	33%

Burnout Hindered Involvement

Burnout as a hindering factor came up in 11% of the CIQ responses, which described burnout as a challenge for staying involved (n=6). Burnout included feeling overwhelmed or that their duties exceeded their energy or capacity. When considering the interviews along with those participants’ CIQ responses, 64% of the interview population described this as a factor that could hinder involvement (n=14). This factor was discussed by 75% of the focus group (n=3).

Some participants referenced former group members who had left the group or stepped back from leadership positions due to stress or other commitments. Other participants felt overwhelmed when their groups added additional focus areas; they did not feel like they had enough members to do the additional work. Some participants had times when they needed more support from other members or from Indivisible National, especially when they felt there were too many demands. Sometimes the burnout came from being so attuned to what was happening in the political landscape. Some participants indicated they would continue to be involved, but with the recent midterm elections and resulting burnout, they wanted to limit future canvassing. Participant 9 wanted to rethink how she and her husband would be involved going forward.

The core group of 10-15 of us really stuck together from Feb '17 to the present. Many have expressed they want to keep it going, but my husband and I are exhausted. We probably will continue but not in the current form. (Participant 9, CIQ)

Participant 33 discussed feeling more burnout while she was still working full-time.

With over half of the study population ages of 65 or older, many participants were retired.

Participant 34 described wanting a more traditional retirement. She wanted to be involved, but

saw she could spend her whole life on this and wanted more balance. Many interview

participants discussed burnout as something that could happen, rather than feeling burnout at the

time of the interview. Participant 36 was actively looking into transition plans for her group

because of a relocation, needing a change, and feeling she had done enough. She may get

involved in her new location in another group, but first needed to regroup.

I've stayed with Indivisible since I began with our group. So I haven't felt disconnected from the group per se, but we have a number of people who have stepped back over the years, so there's a lot of disconnection in that—they've disconnected. People who used to be actively engaged or in leadership positions in many cases have withdrawn for various reasons: the stress was wearing them down, needed to spend more time with grandkids, kids, parents, etc.... I miss both the people who have pulled back and the energy that we had earlier on. I feel guilty at times that I haven't been able to keep more of them engaged. And I have mixed feelings, of both sadness and irritation. Sadness at losing them, but also irritation that people step back when the need for action hasn't gone away. If anything, we're in as much danger now as we ever were. (Participant 39, Interview)

Some participants like Participant 39 referenced other group members that had left due to various reasons such as burnout, and they missed their participation.

Participant 42 explained they were all volunteers, and both volunteers and leaders (also volunteers) can become tired. Leaders could leave and create a vacancy, which could lead to more burnout if additional members did not have the capacity to step up, or if they did not have more members join to help out with the initiatives.

Group Dynamics or Issues with Group Members Could Hurt Involvement

Another factor that could affect sustained involvement was group dynamics or issues with group members not working well together. With the CIQs, 16% of participants described issues with group members, or group dynamics that made involvement more complicated (n=9). With the interview population, 23% described this hindering involvement (n=5). With the focus group population, 25% described this challenge to staying involved in the focus group (n=1).

Participant 7 had some challenges with group behavior and decreased the level and the ways they were involved. Their original organizing group fell apart, and they had felt another member was too patriarchal in his attitude. Another time, they had an experience in which other members were unsupportive of their leadership. Participant 7 became involved through an online group and as a Facebook administrator and did not feel as connected to the local group. They considered attending a larger meeting, but the drive would have been too long.

I had a couple of people that actually ran off with the sign up sheets after a meeting and not be reachable to give me a copy. They basically wanted to usurp leadership from me but I could see that it would have been neither good nor sincere. I reacted by withdrawing from everything and getting depressed. That was several years ago when I was also going through health issues.... I learned to be vigilant for such behavior and to just weather it, because I decided there was no way to prevent rivalry. This basically removed my will to have a steering committee and continue organizing in that way.
(Participant 7, CIQ)

One participant described his group as lacking energy and interest, which led to its decline. Participant 40 then became involved in a different way; he did not feel his previous group members had the necessary energy, drive, or commitment to show up despite challenges.

The couple times we've had a potential to do something (e.g., to protest the Supreme Court's position on overturning Roe v. Wade when that leaked), my calls to action resulted in me and my sister-in-law and her husband being the only people who showed up at the courthouse. It made me so sad that my area had no voice about any of the important issues that were swirling around us these past couple years. Other groups are vital and creative and finding energy in their common cause, while we do nothing.
(Participant 40, CIQ)

Participant 40 questioned why he was working with people who did not share his level of interest. He said he heard little from other group members. This did not refer to conflict, but rather general disengagement or lack of support. Participant 39 discussed feeling disconnected with a chapter co-lead with whom she did not have chemistry; it was not easy to work together. Participant 46 discussed her group's interaction with a Community Police Officer and the subsequent fallout between some group members. Some thought the officer had been racist, others disagreed, and that "drove a wedge in the group," with some never returning.

Participant 45 discussed an intergenerational conflict in which three younger group members had a 'coup' and took over the leadership from some older group leaders. The older leaders had past social action group involvement and had been rigid in their interactions. With limited communication and the ways leaders then approached the members, the chapter lost members and momentum. She attributed this to the group dynamics issues. Community was a major factor for the participants in this study to stay involved. Sometimes community issues led people, external from this study, to leave the group.

Disagreement with Values or Approaches Could Hurt Involvement

Some reported that disagreement with values or approaches could hurt involvement. This factor was discussed in 22% of the CIQs (n=12). When considering the interview transcripts along with those participants' CIQ responses, however, 45% of the population described this as a hindering factor for involvement (n=10). These experiences varied depending on the participant. The fundamental issues were disagreement with core values, or the best approaches to reach activism goals.

I found myself at odds with the approach many of the other reps wanted to take with the Senator. They felt strongly that our job as activists was to make demands and his job was to figure out how to meet our needs. I strongly disagreed. I believe that simply making demands without recognizing his constraints made the group sound petulant and

not realistic. My preference was to acknowledge the constraints and help him think through workarounds, for example, state our preferred outcomes but also give him leeway to negotiate to get as much as he could out of a legislative situation.... I wasn't happy but decided that I would have more impact if I remained a member of the group and continued to advocate for a more collegial approach. (Participant 18, CIQ)

Participant 18 reported disagreeing with group members' plans for interacting with their Senator.

She ended up participating and focusing on the work longer than many other group members.

This was a time she felt disconnected; she did not agree with their approach.

While Indivisible is a non-partisan group, the majority of participants referenced voting for Democratic candidates. Some participants were critical of the Democratic Party for not supporting and investing in certain candidates. Participant 36 felt disconnected from Indivisible and considered the Indivisible National stances as too far left for their local group members.

The vast majority of us live in a gated active adult community. So the youngest of us is probably six—early 60s. Many, many of us are in our 70s, some are in their 80s. The National Indivisible organization is way too far left for us. AOC, the gang are just way too far left, and we are not comfortable going there.... They're too liberal. You know, just on the abortion issue. I am so pro-choice. I am so pro-choice but I am so anti-verbiage that says pro-abortion. It just was pro-, nobody's pro-abortion. Nobody. (Participant 36, Interview)

Other participants identified their groups as moderate as well and considered removing the word "Indivisible" from their group's title. Other disagreements included groups wanting to limit discussions on local issues unrelated to opposing Trump. Other groups expressed disinterest in what the national organization or state organizers were encouraging. Disagreement with values or approaches seemed to bother participants more who took Indivisible founders' guidance to heart; other participants were happy to do their own thing and said that they sometimes went rogue. Participants also introduced the idea that groups questioned how to proceed after President Biden took office: What would be their group's focus with Trump no longer in office? This category speaks to some of the challenges of being part of a larger

organization, managing collective leadership, and trying to build consensus on what to pursue next.

Chapter Summary

This section provided a demographic summary of the study participants and also presented the sustained involvement research findings. In terms of notable demographic information, 80% of the study sample was women; 93% of the population identified as Caucasian/White; 78% was 57 or older; and 93% had a bachelor's degree or higher.

The sustained involvement findings segmented into sections focused on factors for sustained involvement, sub-factors that helped with sustaining involvement, and hindering factors for involvement. The three most significant factors for participants staying involved were Committed community members and relationships with Indivisible members (60% of study participants); Having a sense of duty and values; it was not an option to quit (55% of study participants); and Making a difference and thinking more was possible (67% of study participants). The three most reported sub-factors that helped participants stay involved were: Indivisible's flexible format helped participants make it work for their interests and contexts (40% of study participants); Supportive family members and friends helped participants stay involved (40% of study participants), and It helped to recognize they were one person among many, and they cannot do everything (31% of study participants). The factors for hindered involvement were Burnout (36% of study participants); Group dynamics or issues with group members (20% of the study); and Disagreement with values, approaches (33% of the study participants). The sustained involvement factors, sub-factors that helped to sustain involvement, and hindering factors were broken out by CIQ, Interview, and Focus Group within the chapter.

Chapter 5: Learning and Community Findings

This chapter presents the research findings with the study participants' learnings and changes due to their Indivisible experiences and activism work. Eleven "learning and changes" findings were identified. For ease of reading, the findings are grouped into themed categories for an introduction and individual discussion. The themed categories are: learning democracy and activism; learning to contribute and work together in community; increasing consciousness; leadership and personal development; and empowerment and personal changes. The first two categories are specifically about learning. The next three categories are focused on increased consciousness, personal development, and changes that have continued through their work. Directly after this, the community factors for learning being supported and facilitated, and community impediments to learning are presented.

Table 17. Learning and Changes Findings

- Participants learned how to be an effective citizen, and get things done in the public sphere
- Participants learned about activism and how to organize
- Participants learned about health, social, political, education, and environmental issues
- Participants learned to contribute and use prior knowledge in a new setting
- Participants learned to create community and work together
- Participants had increased consciousness
- Participants experienced leadership and personal development
- Participants ventured out of their comfort zone and gained confidence
- Participants felt empowered through the work
- Participants became more assertive
- Participants became more political and politically engaged

The eleven learning and changes findings are: (1) Participants learned how to be an effective citizen, and get things done in the public sphere; (2) Participants learned about activism and how to organize; (3) Participants learned about health, social, political, education, and environmental issues; (4) Participants learned to contribute and use prior knowledge in a new setting; (5) Participants learned to create community and work together; (6) Participants had increased consciousness; (7) Participants experienced leadership and personal development; (8) Participants ventured out of their comfort zone and gained confidence; (9) Participants felt empowered through the work; (10) Participants became more assertive; and (11)

Table 18. Learning and Changes Findings with Interviews and Total Study

Learning Finding	Code	Descriptor	CIQ %	Interview %	Total % of Participants
LF1	LLHTP	Learning to be an effective citizen	49%	91%	71%
LF2	LACOR G	Activism and how to organize	56%	95%	76%
LF3	LCEV	Learning about health, social, political, education, and environmental issues	22%	68%	47%
LF4	LCUPK	How to contribute and use prior knowledge	16%	86%	45%
LF5	LCOM	How to create community and work together	42%	82%	56%
LF6	LIC	Increased consciousness	51%	91%	75%
LF7	LLDPD	Leadership and Personal Development	42%	55%	51%
LF8	LMCOC	Ventured out of comfort zone, and gained confidence	27%	32%	33%
LF9	EMP	Becoming More Empowered	35%	55%	49%
LF10	LASSV	Becoming More Assertive	27%	59%	45%
LF11	LBMP	Becoming More Political	36%	55%	42%

Participants became more political and politically engaged. These findings varied by participant; not every participant described these learnings or changes. Every interview participant described multiple learnings and/or ways they had changed through their involvement.

The second research question of the study included the sub-question of “What has facilitated or hindered their learning and development?,” and the significant responses all focused on community. This resulted in significant overlap with RQ3, which focused on the role of community in participants’ learning, and what about the community facilitated or hindered learning and changes. Because the same sections of the interviews were consistently identified as both a way learning was facilitated and a community-factor that facilitated learning, the researcher has presented the findings with an integrated and holistic approach to avoid redundancy. This chapter also discusses the community impediments to learning. An analysis of the findings and instrument recommendations may be found in Chapter 6. The most important thing to communicate is that community was mentioned throughout as a primary factor for sustained participant involvement, as well as participants’ learning and changes.

Table 19. Community Facilitating Factors for Learning and Development

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Relationships and Friendships facilitated learning• Participants felt comfortable with like-minded people• Group members provided different kinds of support• Group discussion and dialogue supported learning• There was a place for everyone, no matter the scale or interest area• Participants learned from inspiring leadership in their community• Opportunities with coalition groups facilitated learning or development• Participants gained access to politicians or public figures• Resources, Training, and Workshops supported learning |
|--|

Table 20. Community Impediments to Learning and Development

- Participants felt like they were not working for the same ends or goals
- Everyone was very busy, and had limited bandwidth
- COVID-19 limited in-person meetings or the group lost momentum due to isolation

The Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) responses varied in length and thoroughness. Participants who submitted the CIQ and had an interview sometimes mentioned a kind of learning or change in the interview, but not the CIQ. Appendix O includes a breakdown of thematic category for each participant, with more granular study instrument findings. If a participant wrote about a specific kind of learning in their CIQ and also mentioned it in their interview, this duplicate account was subtracted from the overall study participants. The number preceding “individual participants” and “percentage of all study participants” shows how many people indicated this kind of learning in the overall study. This number will always be out of 55, or a percentage from the total value of 55. It is possible that if the CIQ-only participants or the CIQ and focus group participants were also interviewed, a specific learning would have been identified in an interview.

Learning Democracy and Activism

Participants learned about democracy and activism through their Indivisible involvement. Forty-nine out of 55 participants, or 89% of total study participants, described a kind of learning in the “Learning democracy and activism” category. This is the largest percentage for any kind of learning within the study. The interview and focus group participants all described this kind of learning. They learned how to be an effective citizen and get things done in the public sphere (71% of study participants). They also learned about activism and how to organize (66% of participants). Third, they learned subject-matter knowledge about current health, social, political,

education, and environmental issues (47% of participants). Participants developed understanding about civic engagement, the political process, as well as how to effectively work for activist aims within this system. They also learned subject-matter knowledge about health, social, political, education, and environmental issues often related to their civic engagement and activism aims.

Participants Learned How to be an Effective Citizen and Get Things Done in the Public Sphere

Study participants learned how to be an effective citizen and get things done in the public sphere. This was described by 39 participants (71% of the total study). In consideration of the interview participants' CIQs and interview transcripts, 21 participants (95%) described this kind of learning. Across their CIQs and in the focus group, three focus group participants (75%) described this learning. Across the CIQs, 27 responses (49%) described this kind of learning.

Essentially, I learned how to be an effective citizen. I did not realize how important it is for folks to contact their LOCAL leaders. I figured voting was the only way I could have an impact and that alone feels very defeating (millions of people vote, how on earth could I stand out?). But then Indivisible taught me that I can make a difference by contacting my representatives. They helped me understand that politicians represent US. And if they don't ... we kick them out. (Participant 1, CIQ)

This emergent code started with Participant 1's response above; it was echoed by the majority of study participants in different ways. Participants who had not previously been involved with activism joined Indivisible and then learned how to have more of an impact as a citizen.

This category encompassed many kinds of learning: the selection process for a candidate to get on a ballot, how petitioning works, the intricacies and requirements of lobbying, how city councils operate, as well as how bills proceed through state legislatures to become laws. Some of the learning related to understanding their state governments. Some started at the local level, attending a town hall for the first time, and then started attending meetings.

Our Health action team decided we should hold a town hall to save the ACA like the Guide said to do. None of us had ever organized anything like that, but someone had a connection to an interfaith center that rented rooms, and we looked up phone numbers for

local representatives, and bit by bit we figured it out together, everyone chipping in ideas or connections. Three weeks later 400 people and TV cameras attended a town hall with all 3 Congressmen for our county and 20 other local elected officials where doctors and patients testified about the importance of the ACA. We realized that we have so much more power than we think we have. (Participant 47, CIQ)

Participant 47 reported that their team learned how to plan and organize a healthcare town hall. As a group, they pulled together, planned the event, and got elected officials and the press involved. Participants learned about the requirements and permitting process for public events and rallies. They also learned about the importance of school boards in deciding local education policy, and which officials had decision-making power over specific areas.

Participants spoke to the different ways they learned how things work in the public sphere and on procedural levels. Participant 31 had relatively short CIQ responses, but in the interview described in detail several things she learned through her four years of involvement.

I had no idea how people got on the ballot.... I had no idea that there was this [redacted] Democratic committee, and they determined who got on the ballot.... I just imagined that the best people stood up and they were like, Yes, I'm gonna run. Oh, that's not how it works.... So somebody said the other day to get on the [redacted] Democratic committee, you have to join your town democratic board. So I was like, Okay, I'll join that. And that was actually phenomenal. Because first of all, I learned so much about our town.... I didn't understand about petitioning.... So yeah, I learned a lot, and again that only happened because I was at an Indivisible meeting saying, How the hell do we get this guy to run?... They explained the process to me and said this is what you have to do.... I only joined this town Democratic thing, because at an Indivisible meeting, somebody said that's how you get on to get to vote for the [redacted] person.
(Participant 31, Interview)

Participant 31 first attended a meeting with over 400 people. Later, in the smaller Indivisible group she joined, she had her questions answered as to how things are done in the public sphere. From an Indivisible member, she learned how candidates get on the ballot and that her town had more Democrats than Republicans. Previously thinking she lived in a 'red' area, she then started meeting other like-minded people in her area interested in town issues and became involved in the local Democratic committee. Their work led to a shifting of the town

board toward transparency: officials who put meetings on Zoom and published agendas in advance. This was a change; previous decisions had been made in the dark. Her understanding of the procedures led to new connections with people in her community.

Participant 31's learning about how to become an effective citizen occurred first with Indivisible involvement, followed by involvement with the town Democratic Board. Other participants learned how to accomplish things in the public sphere through involvement in multiple groups. Participant 28 learned how to be an effective citizen through work with Moms Demand Action. This learning occurred when participants engaged in additional social action or civic engagement work after joining Indivisible. Thirty-eight of the 55 study participants (69%) became involved in other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.

Study participants described learning how the legislature works, and learning how to provide their feedback on bills. Participant 30 learned how to speak in front of the state legislature with training that focused on helping people make their voices heard.

So you get registered, get all their training, and you get in. So every Sunday ... they give you talking points on what to say when you're targeting this specific, whatever legislation we're targeting. Yeah, it's so simple. And you can literally, if you want to go down to the State Legislature and speak, and they train on that as well.... Every Saturday I'd open my email, see what the issues were and put it in. And now it's part of the record.... So I would do it, you know, and then they would report back every week. Not only what we're targeting, but the impact of previous things we did, whether it passed or what we should go after. (Participant 30, Interview)

Some of this additional learning occurred through Indivisible group materials, through additional reading, facilitated workshops, or hearing from people directly involved with making the laws. Participant 48 was involved for Indivisible for 5+ years, and she described different kinds of learning in both the CIQ and interview. She enjoyed learning directly from a lawmaker who represented her; this experience was facilitated through her Indivisible group. Having

learned more about how the government works; Participant 48 now had the language to speak to elected officials and relate her point of view to be able to give bill and policy recommendations.

Participants Learned about Activism and How to Organize

Participants learned about activism and how to organize. This was described by 42 individuals (76% of the total study). Twenty-one interview participants (95%) and four (100% of focus group participants described this kind of learning. Across their CIQs and interviews, 21 interview participants (95%) described this kind of learning. In review of the CIQs only, 31 responses (56%) referenced learning about activism and how to organize.

This thematic category focused on participants learning how to organize or be involved in what are sometimes called “resistance” activities or groups. This category includes learning about elements of grassroots organizing and about different forms of protest. Some study participants learned to conduct texting campaigns, effectively message, and manage postcard campaigns. They learned first-hand outreach practices, including canvassing for candidates or finding an entry point to connect with a potential voter. They learned how to use social media to promote their cause, values, or beliefs, and how to combat online misinformation. Participants described learning to work with campaigns, partner with coalition groups, select signage messages, and determine what works for on-the-ground activism. The learning included learning about strategy. Participant 51 had not previously known how political campaigns worked.

I didn't really know how political campaigns worked. I mean, like one of the things that sort of standard tactics and approaches in building your campaign that the competent people do, which is why you spend a lot of time talking to people who, you know, are going to vote for you, and making sure that they, you've reached them, and they're going to vote for people in the party anyway. And there's almost a set series of approaches to try and commit these people to voting. And make sure they will actually do it. There are certain practices. You know [redacted], who were in the best campaign, had the sort of levels of commitment you get from people. So they would build what's called snowballing, so you build up more and more participation that way. And so I have a better sense of how these things work. (Participant 51, Interview)

After learning more about how political campaigns worked, Participant 51 was able to identify when local politicians excelled at building commitment and participation. Alternately, he was able to assess when there was room for improvement in campaigns.

Participant 7 described learning about organizing through both Indivisible and their partnership with another coalition group. The other coalition group members shared their ideas, and they appreciated the other group's analytical approach.

I have actually learned a lot about political organizing, kind of by osmosis. I was most impressed when [redacted] Indivisible collaborated with [redacted]... What I learned from that organizer was how organizing is done, legislative district by legislative district based on the percentage of voters in each category by party. So enlightening! I love data-based approaches. (Participant 7, CIQ)

Participant 7's affiliation with Indivisible gave them one way to understand organizing; their involvement with a coalition group provided additional knowledge about organizing options.

Participant 18 mentioned having prior leadership experience; however, she had not previously considered how to organize advocacy. She learned about successful activism from more experienced group members, how to productively work with political leaders, and how to capably organize. Other lessons included setting up canvassing campaigns and demonstrations. She had Indivisible trainings, learned from others, and considered her 'mistakes and successes.'

Participant 55 described learning about grassroots organizing with a group also new to political organizing. Together they learned, expanded their group's reach, and continued to gain experience through myriad events, campaigns, and rallies at different levels of government.

What I've learned through Indivisible is grassroots organizing, and how much energy and work is needed to make any sort of change. None of us had been involved with political organizing before. We were able to grow from a small, localized group into a much bigger, statewide network of Indivisible members. We've created countless events for friends and neighbors to become politically engaged: setting up regular phone-your-rep and postcards-to-our-rep events on key legislation, creating Meet the Candidate events with state & city level candidates, organizing issues-based rallies (from small corner events to large events at the State Capitol), partnering with other influential grassroots organizations on events and legislative issues, creating statewide speaker

events with our Senators [redacted], bridge brigades, volunteering for candidates in elections and so much more. (Participant 55, CIQ)

Participant 42 recounted that he had been ‘totally ignorant’ about electoral work. After the 2016 Presidential election, however, he determined electoral politics work could make the biggest difference, have the most impact. He considered other groups before Indivisible and then joined two nearby groups with small electoral teams. Participant 42 started coordinating with eight Indivisible chapters in his county, and then progressed to working with chapters in the entire state. He continued to learn how to organize and worked to facilitate statewide communications on Slack, a messaging platform.

Participants Learned about Health, Social, Political, Education, and Environmental Issues

Study participants learned subject-matter knowledge about health, social, political, education, and environmental issues. This was described by 26 participants (47% of the total study). Of the interview population, 15 participants (68%) described this kind of learning, and across their CIQs and interviews, 18 participants (82% of interview participants) described this kind of learning. With the focus group population, across their CIQs and focus group discussion, three participants (75%) described this kind of learning. Across the CIQs, 12 of the responses (22%) included this learning. This lower percentage suggests that this kind of learning would not necessarily be captured with the study’s CIQ instrument, even if it occurred.

This thematic category addressed subject-matter learnings related to current issues across different topics. This included learning about gerrymandering in depth; creating competitive districts; and understanding issues and proposed policies with healthcare, Medicare, and Social Security. Participants learned subject-matter knowledge about Dreamers, along with the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) legal requirements. Some knowledge occurred through self-directed learning. Participant 36 described sourcing information from the ACLU, finding

current Mexican consulate information, studying city-specific policies, and tracking immigration policies. Some participants were previously unaware about the current issues, but developed a subject-matter knowledge through their participation in Indivisible and other related coalition activities. A state specific group was mentioned as a resource for participants to learn about current state legislative issues and bills. That was a helpful entry point for participants to educate themselves on the current compelling issues. Participant 34 learned about policy issues, how they mapped to candidates, and then used her knowledge to inform other potential voters.

So if you understand your constituents and what their concerns are, we tried to match it with the candidate. And one little game we played—I don't know how successful it was, but we invited anybody.... It was like a lunch and learn. Come and see, and we're going to play a game. Here are our issues. We want to know well, what are your issues? Well, Medicare, Social Security, cost of gas, blah, blah, blah, and then we matched them to the candidates who are running on their voting record, and what they had to say about women's rights, or why they voted against veterans.... And so it really opened their eyes. "Well, I didn't know they voted against that." Because most Americans aren't news junkies or political junkies like I am. And doing that, so it's constant education I've learned in the few years I've been active. (Participant 34, Interview)

Participant 34 was one of the participants that read widely to be effective in her activism, in order to educate people. Some participants learned subject-matter knowledge to combat disinformation. Participant 41 went into detail about her local school board knowledge, and what was happening with school boards in her state. This had not been on her radar, though she was a local school district parent. She started watching and liveblogging the school board meetings. She was concerned about school board participants who were involved with QAnon, objected to vaccines, and wanted to ban books.

So for that whole for like, two years now, they have been harassing the school boards about everything. So we started paying attention to them at more meetings and taking notes and trying to counter them.... And I would focus on health statistics. So I would go find some articles about, you know, the number of children in the whole country who have long COVID, the number of children who have like now some serious side effects because they had COVID. Um, so we started trying to counter them, because they would come in and just bully the board, and we have some people who come to almost every board meeting who are like QAnon.... And they would go, and like talk about being

pureblood.... They did not like the policies where, if you weren't vaccinated, you had to stay home from school longer if you were exposed. So they didn't like that.
(Participant 41, Interview)

Participant 41 regularly shared her knowledge with the education subgroup of her Indivisible group. Noting that she was proud of her subcommittee, she stated in her CIQ, "I am really proud of how much I know about our School Board now." She described her passion with this issue and her working knowledge of all the key players, including the superintendent and candidates.

Participant 49 reported learning about current issues around healthcare, explaining the need for a state health act. This kind of learning occurred through group meetings, membership in the Indivisible group's Health Committee, and conducting online research. She learned about Medicare Advantage, the different health care companies, and their healthcare coverage policies.

Some participants described acquiring knowledge through group members, educational programs, and sources like historian Heather Cox Richardson's (2024) *Letters from an American* newsletter. Others used websites established to teach them about current bills under consideration. Interest groups within Indivisible chapters also led to issue-specific learning. Some participants developed interest in topics or issues originating through their Indivisible work and focused their pursuit of knowledge or advocacy beyond Indivisible work.

Learning to Contribute and Work Together in Community

Through Indivisible, participants learned to add value and contribute their prior knowledge and backgrounds in a new setting and organization. As they worked, their participation gave them the opportunity to apply existing skills and navigate with others to further their Indivisible goals. Participants also learned to create community and collaborate; many provided examples of collective leadership. Thirty-four participants (62% of the total study) described a kind of learning included in the "Learning to contribute and work together in community" section. Ninety-five percent of the interview participants and 100% of focus group

participants described a kind of learning in this category. The findings follow with examples, selected quotes, and an overview of some of the themes that participants reported.

Participants Learned to Contribute and Use Prior Knowledge in a New Setting

Study participants described learning how to contribute and use their prior knowledge in a new setting. This was described by 25 participants (45% of total study). Of the interview population, 19 participants (86%) described this kind of learning across methods. With the focus group population, four participants (100%) described this learning across their CIQs and in the focus group. With the CIQs only, nine responses (16%) described this kind of learning.

Many participants had prior knowledge that helped with their activism goals.

Participant 47 applied her project organizational experiences and expanded the scale of her professional knowledge.

My first career was international development. So I think I did have a background thinking about community organizations, and thinking about how organizations function. And so I'm currently in health services research. So I think I am used to thinking about how do you organize projects? It's kind of funny because you know, at our peak, we were about 750 people, which is definitely larger than anything I've managed professionally. (Participant 47, Interview)

Participant 54 applied her supervisory and motivational skills to Indivisible organizing work. In her case, she reported that she could use her supervising experience to articulate the goal, give colleagues the space to achieve it, and support them as she reminded them of the purpose of the work. Her knowledge that burnout was a possible outcome in both professional and volunteer arenas helped keep her aware to be able to best support the other Indivisible volunteer colleagues.

I said ... I have no clue how to do this. I don't know anything about organizing. I don't know much about Indivisible. He said you've got the right instincts. I wasn't so sure. I think that goes back to something [redacted] said about people. I think the skill that I brought from my prior life was that I supervised programmers. The way you supervise programmers is you tell them the goal, and then you get out of their way. And it kind of works for volunteers to a certain extent, but then the skill comes in preventing

burnout, making people feel good. You know about what they're doing, keeping them on mission. You know, there's lots of good things to do there in the world, but keep reminding them of the mission. (Participant 54, Focus group)

Some Indivisible participants had impressive professional and academic backgrounds and brought their knowledge to teach community members. These were not canned lectures: these presentations were prepared and tailored for the audience for functional purposes. Participant 51 had professional experience in an area of law and used his knowledge to prepare educational talks about democracy and the rule of law. He identified his and another leader's background and skills as needed.

I remember traveling with one of our leaders to do a talk on democracy and the rule of law. Both of us gave talks on this subject together or separately in the community after Trump's election. I realized that he and I had a lot of common background and skills that were needed at this time, and became deeply appreciative of all he was doing to try to keep the democracy intact. (Participant 51, Interview)

Participant 50 was a writer and used his writing skills for his Indivisible chapter's newsletter; he also supported a colleague who was learning to write for the public. Participant 42 had a computer science and technology background and applied it to support Indivisible-related initiatives and technology needs. Participant 49 had used social media somewhat in a work context and brought her knowledge to her group. Participant 40 was knowledgeable about the origins and history of the United States and helped to inform discussions with his regular group. Other study participants discussed adapting knowledge and skills from their professional backgrounds to add value to Indivisible-related initiatives, including managing employees, understanding how to support and motivate people, using graphic design skills to support their groups' initiatives, and more.

Participants Learned to Create Community and Work Together

Study participants learned to create community and work together on common initiatives. This was described by 31 participants (56% of the total study). Of the interview population, 18 participants (82%) described this kind of learning. Some described learning to share leadership,

while other participants described working together on common projects and learning to share responsibilities as a team. This thematic category also included participants who reported that the group members operated in collective or shared leadership, and figured out how to develop their leadership structure as the group encountered challenges, the loss of group members, or the addition of participants who also wanted to be active participants. With the focus group population, three participants (75%) described learning to create community and work together. In review of the CIQs only, 23 participants (42%) described learning to work together on Indivisible or Indivisible-adjacent activities.

Participant 33 was new to activism and described herself as a former Republican. She became a co-leader with another member with whom she felt a rapport.

And before I knew it, I became a member of the core leadership team, I don't even know how that happened. It was just sort of this organic thing. But I developed a really close relationship with [redacted]. And [redacted] and I, we share the same birthday, and I'm not sure if that has anything to do with this, but we just we meld together really, really well. And so we became sort of the co-leaders, neither one of us wanted to be completely in charge. But we figured we would balance you know, we could kind of tag-team on everything, and that's what we've done. And so we don't have a huge group of the core team. I think there's four or five of us at any given time, but we've been able to really get a lot done. (Participant 33, Interview)

Participant 37 had a leadership role with his group and emphasized the collective nature of the work throughout his interview. He mentioned specific group members, his admiration of their contributions, and his appreciation for how they could work together. He described trying to be mindful of his personality when working with Indivisible members.

I've learned a lot about the minutiae, what it takes to really work cooperatively and work on a, you know, broader, kind of majority or many ways consensus type basis, and I've learned about, you know, how tricky that can be, and how certain personalities can dominate and I've really tried to.... I have a strong personality. It's part of, you know ... I'm a middle aged white guy, and I've had it as good as about anybody in the history of the planet. And so I really tried to be mindful of not being that dominating that, and what's amazing is that in my opinion, I firmly believe that [redacted chapter] Indivisible is best led by women, by a woman face of our group, specifically whether it's a chair or

whether it's the person who is you know, the one that is the most out front.... We are best led by women, and so I really try to defer to that if possible. (Participant 37, Interview)

Other participants discussed learning how to work as a collective or with others, without necessarily relying on a hierarchy. This varied with the different groups. Participant 39 reported the misconception that there has to be a specific hierarchy. As a result, participants had the opportunity to learn how to work together in a less familiar setting—a grassroots organization, which was new to them as new activists.

Yeah, I mean, with this friend of mine who just started a chapter in a [redacted] local suburb. She'll ask me some questions like, Well, is it okay? Well, does Indivisible allow us to do that? And because I think people just automatically think there's some sort of hierarchy, you know, and that we're following somebody else's rules. But if you remember how it started, which was completely grassroots, and the organization basically was built around the grassroots movement. It's not really hierarchical at all. And you can just kind of take it, you know, take what works. (Participant 39, Interview)

Participant 51 explained that there is a lot of consensus-based decision making, saying, “There was enough unity that it kind of worked.” He then provided additional information about how communities can better work together:

Try to listen to other people and get a sense of where they are. And if you need to steer things differently, try to do it respectfully. You know, if you're a man, I think you've got to not be interrupting women or talking too much. I think it's really, you gotta go out of your way as white males to encourage women, and also make sure that you know, if you've got Black people in your coalition, that they're welcome and treated well. You know, we've got to keep people together.... Just try to realize that the collective power is going to be about people feeling comfortable. (Participant 51, Interview)

Consensus-based decision making was an adjustment for Participant 51; he adapted to the more community-oriented way of making plans within his Indivisible group. It continued not to be his favorite, but he was willing to adjust to accomplish the work. His affection for other community members grew, though he did not always view them as being realistic in terms of political beliefs or how best to accomplish initiatives. Indivisible gave him more experience with collective leadership and how it can work in practice.

Increasing Consciousness

This section focuses on participants who described having increased consciousness through their participation in Indivisible or related activities. There is only one finding in this category.

Participants Had Increased Consciousness

Participants described examples of having increased consciousness after their involvement with activism and Indivisible. This was described by 39 participants (71% of the total study). Of the interview population, 20 interview participants (91%) described this kind of change. With the focus group population, two participants (50%) described increased consciousness. With the CIQs only, 28 participants (51%) described this kind of change after being involved as new activists in the 2017-2020 window.

Participants noted different kinds of consciousness that developed through their involvement with Indivisible, coalition groups, or other initiatives they learned about after becoming politically active. Participant 35 described as having been in a bubble before her involvement in Indivisible. Hearing people's personal stories and accounts changed her understanding of what it was like for members of affected groups. Her eyes were opened about others' circumstances, and the effect the political climate was having on youth in her community.

I have lived in a certain kind of bubble... One story of one of the Dreamers that, you know, broke my heart was, this young man has been in the area since he was maybe two. He is now almost finished with college. And he comes from a family at the time when his father in Mexico was a, you know, a wanted person, etc. But anyway, he has gone through all of his schooling in the States in [redacted] and within a few weeks of the election of Trump, his friends in school were no longer his friends. It was like he was crushed. He couldn't believe it. And he said, these are kids that I went to kindergarten with, that I've been with in my entire life. And now they see me as this, you know, contemptible, person that they can't associate with, and that just broke my heart. And he was not the only story like that, and if I hadn't been in with Indivisible, if I hadn't been with the immigration team, I would have never. I would have continued to live in this la

la land, knowing that people were discriminated against, but not really feeling it.
(Participant 35, Interview)

Participant 35 referenced a kind of consciousness that changed through her involvement. It is one thing to know discrimination was an issue. It is another thing to feel it. She started to connect policies with the broader community members she knew; her knowledge and consciousness increased because of her role on the immigration team.

Another kind of increased consciousness had to do with positionality: a person's place within the world. With involvement came an increased awareness of place within community and country, and an attendant responsibility to be knowledgeable and aware.

The most important thing I learned is that as a well-educated cis upper-middle-class white woman, my life experiences and how governmental actions affect me are very different than what is experienced by so many others and consequently I needed to pay more attention to what happens in politics at ALL levels of government. (Participant 21, CIQ)

A third kind of increased consciousness related to increased consciousness about the political process, and how democratic aims were being subverted. The consciousness was not about themselves; it was a kind of learning or awareness of a political reality. Participant 40 described becoming aware of issues regarding an independent commission that was supposed to create fair voting districts. With his regular learning and discussions with other interested people, he became strongly engaged with this specific issue in his state, and elections at all levels.

What I came to realize as the process unfolded was that, despite the intention of the framers of the enabling constitutional amendment, the supposedly independent commission could be completely manipulated by the major parties to co-opt and subvert the will of the people to have it act in a non-partisan way to create districts that promoted fair and competitive elections and resulted in government that was responsive to the needs of the people. Instead the commissioners used it to carve up the electorate for their own partisan aims, just like the legislatures did in the past before the [redacted] was enacted, creating as many safe districts as they could for their own party and conceding the same to the other party when they couldn't manage to hobble them in any other way. They way they looked at it was that it was good for [redacted, the state] if the end result was a legislature that was pretty closely balanced as to the numbers of seats for each party, but tilted just enough to their own, so they would be able to control it to pass their

own agenda, regardless of what the voters said was important. That's exactly the opposite of what the voters wanted when they passed the initiative that created the commission.
(Participant 40, CIQ)

The increased consciousness and awareness that the will of the voters could be subverted, despite stated goals, led to further action and discussion with other coalition group members. At first disillusioned, he then focused his energy on this area and became knowledgeable about how this was happening around the country.

Leadership and Personal Development

Participants reported personal growth and changes that occurred through their social action participation. Some study participants described both personal development and leadership development, venturing out of their comfort zone or gaining confidence over the course of their participation in the study. The two study findings are "Learning leadership and personal development capabilities" and "Participants ventured out of their comfort zone and gained confidence." With the "Leadership and personal development" category, 33 participants (60% of the total study) described this kind of change or development. Seventy-seven percent of the interview participants described a kind of change or development in this category, and 75% of the focus group participants described a kind of change or development in this category.

Participants Experienced Leadership and Personal Development

Fifty-one percent of all study participants described personal development or leadership development occurring through their involvement with Indivisible. Of the interview population, 12 participants (55%) described this in the interviews, and across the CIQs and interviews, 14 interview participants (64%) described this development. With the focus group population, three participants (75%) described this across the two methods. With the CIQs only, 23 participants (42%) of the CIQs described leadership or personal development.

One change was in seeing myself as a leader. As I became more knowledgeable about government, politics and organizing I realized that I could be a leader. I am somewhat shy and introverted (while also sociable) so it can be hard to put myself out there. Since joining Indivisible I have been asked to co-lead our local group, [redacted] Indivisible, I have organized and led many events and I have run for and been elected in local politics as a County Committee Member. I would say this change came in part from the founding lead of our group because she expressed confidence in my skills and validated my ideas and plans. Her calm, non-guilt inducing leadership style appealed to me and was something I have emulated. Also group members readily agreed with me taking on this role which was also encouraging. (Participant 26, CIQ)

Participant 26 wrote in her CIQ about seeing herself as a leader, which changed due to her Indivisible involvement. This change occurred by having opportunities to lead and organize events, having support from her co-lead and group members, and having a model for a leadership style. Many interview participants mentioned developing leadership skills and having experienced personal development, often in conjunction with interactions with other supportive group members. There were no correlations with demographic categories like age range, education, or experience level for the study participants. Many study participants had extensive professional work experiences prior to becoming involved with Indivisible. Participant 37 was a solo entrepreneur. He had experience managing his own business; he identified that Indivisible helped him in the development of his leadership skills.

Indivisible has also helped me develop and refine leadership skills, envisioning and working collaboratively on projects is something I'm adept at and my experience with Indivisible has put that to the test repeatedly and successfully. I am so grateful to have connected with an entire community I wouldn't have known without Indivisible, if there is a silver lining to the atrocity of the Trump era, that's it! (Participant 37, CIQ)

Participant 37 had skills he brought to his activism work; with his leadership development and experiences with collaborative project work, he started to expand his specialties. There was a place for him in Indivisible. He could add value and personally develop. Participant 37 identified the opportunity for his group's social action presence to take off and was effective in gaining

followers. This generated interest from groups outside of his area; he developed innovative strategies to foster engagement.

Participant 48 described increased leadership skills, gained after learning of and developing comfort with Indivisible initiatives. She next took on opportunities with related groups. She initially got involved slowly, increased the kinds of work she was involved in, and realized her capabilities as a leader. No study participants indicated that they had joined Indivisible to gain leadership experience or develop personally; however, half of all the participants benefited from this kind of growth or change.

This year I ran for office and won. I never desired to be a candidate and was satisfied to work on another person's campaign. I believe that it was my leadership in Indivisible groups that provided me with the notion of holding office.... Our regional director was instrumental in encouraging me to run for office and provided her expertise and knowledge of strategies I could use to be successful. (Participant 30, CIQ)

Participant 30 ran for office and won the week that she filled out the CIQ. She had not wanted to do this prior to her Indivisible involvement. She even fought suggestions that she should run. Despite this, people kept seeing leadership capabilities in her; with their encouragement and support, she won the election. She had many first year goals and felt confident that the community would continue to support her in improving outcomes in her state. Upon review of the transcripts and CIQs, it became apparent that personal growth was not something participants had anticipated they would be experiencing. For the participants who described this kind of development, it seemed to be a meaningful change.

Participants Ventured out of Their Comfort Zone and Gained Confidence

When asked about any changes that resulted from their involvement in Indivisible activities, a third of study participants reported that they had ventured out of their comfort zones and gained confidence. This was described by 18 participants (33% of the total study). Of the interview population, seven participants (32%) described this kind of learning in the interviews, and across their CIQs and interviews, 10 participants (45%) described this kind of change. With

the focus group population, this kind of change was not mentioned in either the focus group or the CIQ. With the CIQs only, 15 responses (27%) described this kind of change.

This finding encompasses people who described getting out of their comfort zone and feeling more confident through their involvement in Indivisible. For some, it started with some version of ‘can I do this?’. Some participants described working through their feelings of introversion. They were willing to get out of their comfort zones to become more actively involved in outreach activities. For some, it involved becoming more vocal about their beliefs and value systems, meeting unknown people, and learning to wear an ‘activist’ label. When the work called for actively engaging, it did not always come naturally; they learned to manage their natural inclination to put themselves out there. Some participants described having more confidence in doing an activity like canvassing, as they had opportunities for trial and error.

Participant 50 gave an account of getting out of his comfort zone and gaining confidence around a specific skill set as a fundraiser. Before his involvement in Indivisible, he did not know how to do fundraising; through his social action work, he had a great deal of fundraising success, and then gained confidence in this ability.

So I sort of learned how to ask people for money and not feel super weird about it. And that’s been pretty powerful. We raised not just me, but like our group with all the various things we did, we raised about [redacted, six figures] in 2020, and have continued to do other stuff since then. And so I think that’s been sort of a really powerful lesson that I’ve learned, I think, in general....

I don’t remember who told me, who sort of shared this idea with me. Instead of thinking of it as like, Okay, now I’m gonna go bother people and ask them for money and like, annoy them.... I decided to think of it instead as like, there are all these people in my life, who really care about politics, who really want to do something, and have no idea what to do. And it’s too much work and too much effort to figure it out. Like, where should I spend my money? What should I do? And so I’m going to present them with some possibilities, and they don’t have to [do anything], and like they can ignore me. But I’ll put it out there as an opportunity for people to do something tangible politically.... I don’t need the money thankfully and this is sort of sharing an opportunity with people, an opportunity to do something and that’s helped me. And helped me sort of feel more

comfortable and confident asking people for money, rather than feeling awkward and strange about it. (Participant 50, Interview)

Participant 50's belief that the country was in a crisis helped him become more comfortable with asking people to fund causes he deemed important. He also described his co-group leader becoming a strong writer, despite not previously having confidence in this area and avoiding writing prior to Indivisible.

My political partner is a [redacted] and he's always described himself as having gone to medical school because he knew that he wouldn't have to write any more essays to be a doctor, and he was so transformed. He was so horrified by what had happened in the world, that he was willing to do this crazy thing with me where he would have to come up with two original email/essays every single week, to send out to the group and you know, [he] became a really funny, clever, insightful, impassioned writer, as sort of a side product of getting invested in this political work. And that has always struck me as one of the examples of the ways in which when you need to, you can transform yourself into another better version of yourself, and discover that you have skills that you were insistent on that you didn't have and couldn't have. (Participant 50, Interview)

Participant 50's co-group leader was motivated and was willing to get outside of his comfort zone to educate and communicate with group members about what was going on and what he thought needed to be done. His conviction for the importance of the work is why he did it with his already full life: he was described as another busy parent with a demanding profession. This is one more friendship developed through a shared interest and participation in the work.

Participant 50 expressed an admiration for this colleague's growth, insight, humor, and depth of care, as evidenced in his writings and other contributions to Indivisible-related initiatives.

Participant 50 also had extensive writing experience professionally, so his background was able to support them working together.

Six interview participants mentioned being introverted, which was not necessarily something that changed in their lives. They managed their feelings of introversion to be able to do what they needed to for their involvement. Participant 47 became more comfortable with

taking charge in new situations when it was necessary, even though it went against her normal preferences. This happened with time, experience, and “a truly amazing group of people.”

Empowerment and Personal Changes

This final learning and change category focuses on three areas in which participants described changes that occurred through their years of Indivisible participation. The findings are “Participants felt empowered through the work,” “Participants became more assertive,” and “Participants became more political.” In this category, 41 participants (75% of the study) described at least one kind of change. Of the interview population, 22 participants (100%) described at least one change, with two focus group participants (50%) noting a change.

Participants Felt Empowered Through the Work

One study finding was that participants described feeling empowered through the work or feeling some sort of empowerment through their involvement. This was described by 27 participants (49% of the total study). With the interview population, 14 participants (64%) reported this across their CIQs and interviews. Two focus group participants (50%) described this change across their CIQs and focus group. With the CIQs only, 19 responses (35%) of the CIQs included this kind of change.

Participants felt empowered through their participation in Indivisible and related activities in different ways. One participant referenced a virtual training that was influential for her feeling empowered. The training was designed to help community members understand how to participate with their state’s legislature in an accessible, effective way. Participant 30 used the training to start responding to bills; she found that ability to respond as a regular citizen to be an empowering experience. Facilitated learning or training from Indivisible or other groups led to

participants feeling empowered; this will be discussed in the next section of facilitators for learning and development.

In her interview, Participant 18 said, “I think the biggest thing I’ve learned is really how much power we actually do have.” She referenced many things she had learned: how to organize a town hall; how to use Mailchimp and Twitter; how to do Zoom presentations. An action group of her chapter got two bills passed, and three members of Congress showed up to her group’s town hall. Participant 18 recognized the group’s power; the action teams were able to focus on what was important to them within the chapter. This is related to support, as well as feeling empowered to work toward change as a group, or, in this case, collective teams. They felt their ideas would be considered, other people would care, and help them to work toward their goals.

Participant 10 felt empowered because they felt that they were making a difference.

In the midst of all this volunteering, I felt empowered despite what Trump & the GOP was doing to our country. Not that there were not times of despair, but I felt I was making a difference. Looking back I feel proud that I raised my hand and stepped up to fight for what I believe will make a better world. I think there are many people like myself that are responsible for the recent 2022 election results. (Participant 10, CIQ)

Other empowerment felt empowered because they were part of a movement working toward change.

Participants Became More Assertive

When asked about any changes that resulted from their involvement in Indivisible activities, 25 participants described having become more assertive (45% of the total study) describing this kind of change. Of the interview population, 13 participants (59%) described this kind of change in the interviews. Across the CIQs and interviews, 16 interview participants (73%) described this kind of change. With the focus group population, this was not mentioned in either the focus group or their CIQs. With the CIQs only, 15 participants (27%) described this.

Some of the participants described being more assertive or outspoken when it came to discussing activism by challenging misinformation and being willing to speak up when they would not have in the past. Participant 33 described this in her interview:

I grew up in an environment, and I guess I think most people in my generation did, where we were taught never to discuss politics or religion, and that it was rude somehow that you shouldn't do it. I've completely kind of backed off on that. I still, I still in my gut. I'm still a very polite Southern woman, but I'm not afraid to jump into a debate with anybody anymore. I have full confidence in my knowledge of these issues and what's been going on. And so I—one of the things I will say that has changed about me and I try to be nice, I don't want to be rude. I don't want to get into a shouting match with someone. But I also don't back down. Especially when people try to present things. You know, that you just listen to it, and it's just nonsense.... I don't hold back on those things anymore, and I've lost a lot of friends. And I've developed a lot as well. I have a lot of relationships that are just not the same. They're tense and not fun anymore to have conversations with certain people.... I'm just like, hey, this stuff's too important. I'm sorry, you know, I'm not gonna pretend it's not important just to make you feel more comfortable. (Participant 33, Interview)

Participant 33 was no longer willing to smooth things over or avoid politics to keep the peace. Her assertiveness developed after being involved with Indivisible. It was too important: she had to speak up. She noted that this had impacted relationships.

Participant 15 also started speaking up more and putting herself out there. There were people who would disagree with her, but she felt that it was important to speak up.

I think I have become braver, more outspoken and I am able to let things roll off of my back.... I learned that you cannot give up, And we must push forward so that people in this country and in the world can be safer and more secure. I learned that there were actually quite a number of progressive people in the very red county that I live in. I learned that it is important to put yourself out there, to speak up for moral justice and to not be afraid of the crazies that are out there. (Participant 15, CIQ)

Participants described calling up the offices of politicians to express their disagreement with decisions and lodging direct complaints with representatives they did not feel were representing them. They experimented with engaging in political conversations with others, even if it led to tension or the loss of a friendship. This happened in person, but participants also became more assertive online.

I think it's important. I got more active on Facebook. It used to be my high school friends, and I used to be political on Facebook because these are my high school friends, and I might lose half of my friends or all of my friends. But over the past two years, I got more vocal about it. (Participant 44, Interview)

Participant 44 thought that getting out the vote was the most important part of her work. She did not think it was necessarily possible to change entrenched views; she did think it was important to speak up for what she believed in. Participant 41 was not willing to be quiet about what she believed in and started to make choices about whom she wanted to remain friends with during the Trump administration. She reported that there were people who did not want women to have rights or to be able to vote, writing "I kind of really shifted."

Some participants spoke up at board meetings or wrote and signed letters to the editor for their local area. Participants discussed canvassing, registering people to vote, and approaching family and friends who they thought might not be aligned with them politically. There were other participants who reported that they had become more assertive in online forums and were able to express their views publicly, managing a Twitter page.

Participants Became More Political and Politically Engaged

A subset of study participants described becoming more political and politically engaged after their involvement with Indivisible, with 23 individual participants (42% of the total study) describing this kind of change. With the interview population, 12 participants (55%) described this kind of change. Across their CIQs and interviews, 15 participants (68%) described this. The focus group participants did not discuss becoming more political. With just the CIQs, 20 participants (36%) reported becoming more political and politically engaged.

But personally, I've changed. Oh, I'm way more, way way more political.... I was nowhere near as political as I am now. I'm the house when people say, Oh, where do you live? I live in the house with 18 signs. Do you know what I mean? If you're running as a Democrat in our county, I've got your sign. I wasn't like that before that. Not at all. But now I think it's important. We have to stand up. (Participant 31, Interview)

Participant 31 put up yard signs to advocate for progressive candidates in her area, and other participants did as well, even if there was pushback. Participant 34 put up a sign in what she described as a very “red” area, and also started wearing a Biden shirt.

I wore my Biden shirt in 2020 around here, nobody said anything to me at all. I did put out Biden Harris lawn signs, and the HOA here notified me that I was offending my other neighbors, and then I had to take my political signs down. And I just told them if you would like I’ll get an ACLU lawyer, but that’s my right to have whatever I want. So I don’t care if I’m offending MAGA people. I don’t like their Trump flags. So we went back and forth a little bit, but they finally left me alone, but I’ve been called a communist. (Participant 34, Interview)

In her interview, Participant 34 described how she was living in her area to be close to family; many neighbors did not agree with her political beliefs. Prior to her retirement, she had not been as political as she then became after joining Indivisible.

This change involved participants reporting they were more political, as well as more politically engaged. This finding might seem obvious given the focus of the study, but it was not reported by the majority of participants. In addition to what many of them had done before—voting and donations—they were much more aware of players in politics, political news, and proposed policies. They attended political events, canvassed, and attended political rallies. Participants also identified the stakes of not being politically involved.

Well, I think because really since 2016, I’ve been transformed. I’m very passionate about politics, like it’s something that I have learned so much about. It’s like part of me now. (Participant 41, Interview)

Participant 41 described that people would quit or not want to hold public offices if they were bullied. She had not followed politics prior to the Trump administration; she became knowledgeable and engaged.

This category encompasses both an awareness, as well as the related actions and ways to be involved and active in the political process. Some of the members had joined their local Democratic party and became interested in holding the party accountable when they did not think

it adequately represented them. They were willing to be critical about the system, while also active constituents. The amount of time they spent on politics, political activities, and becoming more informed increased for these participants after the 2016 Presidential election.

Community Facilitating Factors for Learning and Development

This section will present findings related to factors that helped facilitate participants' learning and development. This section will incorporate the sub-research question of Research Question 2 focused on learning facilitators, as well as Research Question 3, which specifically inquired about the role of community in participants' learning or changes. As mentioned earlier, the cross-code analysis showed that factors facilitating learning and development were also community-related factors. As a result, this section could be called "Participants learned through community teaching, support, and opportunities." Nine community facilitators are in this section: (1) Community relationships and friendships facilitated learning; (2) Participants felt comfortable with like-minded people; (3) Group members provided different kinds of support; (4) Group discussion and dialogue supported learning; (5) There was a place for everyone, no matter the scale or interest area; (6) Participants learned from inspiring leadership in their community; (7) Opportunities with coalition groups facilitated learning or development; (8) Participants gained access to politicians or public figures; and (9) Resources, Training, and Workshops supported learning. Quotes for these facilitators may be found in Appendix R, and a table including all the research methods may be found in Appendix P.

There were multifaceted ways in which new activists reported that aspects of their communities contributed to their learning and development. These categories and information on study participant percentages may be found below.

Table 21. Community Facilitators for Learning and Development

Community Facilitators (CF)	Code	Descriptor	CIQ %	Interview %	Focus Group %	Total % of study participants
CF1	ACRF	Community Relationships or Friendships	36%	95%	75%	64%
CF2	COLMP	Participants felt comfortable with like-minded people	65%	95%	100%	58%
CF3	PSFOG	Group members provided different kinds of support	53%	73%	75%	64%
CF4	ADGD	Group discussion and dialogue	25%	95%	50%	58%
CF5	CPFE	Place for everyone, no matter the scale or interest area	40%	91%	75%	60%
CF6	PILS	Participants learned from inspiring leadership	25%	45%	25%	45%
CF7	AOCG	Opportunities with coalition groups	36%	86%	100%	60%
CF8	POGTKP	Participants gained access to politicians or public figures	24%	55%	25%	38%
CF9	ARES	Resources, Training, and Workshops	33%	64%	75%	55%

Community Relationships and Friendships Facilitated Learning

Many participants reported that community relationships or friendships were helpful for their learning or development. This community facilitator was mentioned in 20 of the CIQ responses (36% of study participants). Twenty-one of those interviewed (95%) reported that community members had helped their learning. This factor was also mentioned by 3 participants in the focus group (75%), and 35 total participants across the study (64%).

Often, participants mentioned a specific person or people in their group that led to their learning.

And we are known as [redacted name] one, and [redacted name] two, because we are each other's you know, pep group information group, and whatever.... Yesterday I had a one hour conversation with her about all kinds of things related to what to do with our new Congressman. You know, and we feed each other, you know, did you read this? And she's always very supportive with things to read that have nothing to do with politics or whatever, just interesting stuff, you know. (Participant 35, Interview)

Participant 35's friendship with a group member led to the regular transfer of information between them. This was someone she kept up on the news with, and their friendship led to learning. For many participants, their community relationships or friendships led to additional learning and increasing information exchange around topics unrelated to activism or politics.

Learning was also supported by interactions with more experienced activists from whom they could learn and community members knowledgeable about topics because of their personal or professional experiences. Participant 3 met a woman who was more knowledgeable about politics at a resistance event. She was able to learn with her guidance, was open to her feedback, and took over some of her mentor's responsibilities after her mentor was elected to a position.

Along the way I worked with a woman who had started another Indivisible group. We met when I volunteered at the 2017 Women's March. She was also a member of the Democrats of [redacted] a local Democratic group. We clicked. I would meet her at the Office each Monday when she was volunteering. She was my mentor. [Redacted] pointed me in the right direction if I needed help. She was well versed in politics and I was a fast learner. [Redacted] would often contact me and suggest ideas to improve my plans. I valued her input and am proud that I am able to function independently now. She eventually ran for the [redacted] City Council. I took over the majority of work on marches as she works as a [redacted] City Counselor. I still seek her out if I need help. (Participant 3, CIQ)

While Participant 3 had not been in the same Indivisible group as her mentor, their interests in resistance activities and Indivisible affiliation served as points of connection.

New interests developed in Indivisible groups. Members had a built in community of people with knowledge, interest areas, and skill sets from whom they could learn. Participants often learned together when they were new to something and worked together to figure it out.

There were study participants who reported that *most* of the learning that occurred within the context of their activism work happened through community relationships. This could look like different things, and Participant 47 offered some examples of people sharing information or giving mini-tutorials. Some groups gave participants the opportunity to meet people from different professional backgrounds they would not have necessarily met otherwise. Sometimes these group participants had very specialized knowledge, and because the group members had the shared Invisible connection, they sometimes had access to high-powered and connected people willing to give their time and energy to them.

I would say almost everything we've learned, we've learned from each other. I think we've somehow managed to get a dynamic where everyone is comfortable just sort of jumping in. And so, you know, everybody keeps throwing a different piece in and brings a different piece of information, and that's how we learned. I mean, sometimes there's like, specific things like Twitter. Someone will say, well I've done Twitter, and they'll do a mini tutorial. So we've had a few more targeted things, but a lot of it is just sort of saying well, I've been reading up about, you know, the politics in Pennsylvania. So it's really, I think, it's been mostly just a cultivated dynamic where everybody feels very comfortable pitching in what they know and I'll be honest, we also have a pretty impressive group ... the people who are coming also bring a lot of skills with them. (Participant 47, Interview)

The learning within this category included informal learning, as well as learning from others' lived experiences. Participant 32 became close friends with several members of her local community who were not affiliated with Indivisible. She grew to know them through her efforts to support them and promote democracy and civic engagement.

So the community that I deal with? Yes, they're my guides, and they're there. They're my mentors because they're the ones that are living the life, and have come up against the obstacles that they may have. And if I can lend a helping hand and give them exposure, then mission accomplished. (Participant 32, Interview)

Participant 32's friendships gave her a broader understanding of the concerns of people in different communities; she learned the best access points to engage and support them. Her learning took place as the relationships developed, often in her home. Sometimes the guides were people in the group who were well-versed in politics, and who could point out areas for participants to consider reading up on next.

Participants Felt Comfortable with Like-minded People

Another facilitator for participants' learning and development was participants feeling comfortable with like-minded people. This category included participants who described the environment being comfortable because of the people; they could freely express themselves. This community facilitator was described in 36 of the CIQ responses (65%). When considering the interview transcripts along with those participants' CIQ responses, 22 participants (100% of the population) described this community-based learning facilitator. This was reinforced by all four of the focus group participants (100%) during the focus group discussion.

I found that holding my sign and being with other like-minded people (we talked a lot to one another) bonded me to the group and many of these people are now my friends ... being out on the street protesting with like-minded people encouraged me. We had interesting discussions about current events, democracy and strategies for future protests and other things we might do.

One of our members, [Redacted] was involved with [redacted group] and got a number of us interested in helping her with their letter writing campaign. Others would mention events they were attending or canvassing they were doing and some of us would also go. (Participant 46, CIQ)

Participant 46 primarily focused her activism on outdoor events with others who had common interests. She developed a passion for this, and the people that she held signs with enjoyed this activism activity, brainstorming ideas about what to put on their signs. She called them "like-minded" twice in her CIQ, and her comfort with them led to her trying out other activities.

Some participants felt the Indivisible groups offered members a community environment with people interested in the same issues. They felt other members had similar values and hopes for the future; they appreciated these shared core values. For many, it was not an environment where they were expected to be perfect or know everything; instead, it was a space in which they could be vulnerable and honest about their hopes, what they knew, and what they did not know. There were not the same pretenses someone might find in a more hierarchical institution, as in an educational environment or a professional workplace. Many participants felt they could show up and be themselves with other like-minded people at the meetings, which created a safer learning and development space. Learning can be supported when groups and teams feel psychologically safe (Baker, 2010, p. 184). Participants who lived in self-described ‘red’ or conservative areas appreciated a place where they could get together with others.

But in terms of making social connections and getting involved, it is a good number, as you really can get to know people who are like-minded and it is very encouraging. [Redacted] is truly purple now, but our legislative district and our community is very red. It’s very, very red. So for people to find like-minded friends is really helpful and important, and they find it very valuable. (Participant 36, Interview)

Participant 36 felt comfortable with other like-minded group members. She did not socialize with them outside of the group, but she appreciated knowing people who shared common interests.

There were participants who were unsure what to do directly after the election, but they wanted to show-up to be around others who felt the same, or who might feel the same. The scaffolding of the group structure provided a space with other people with common interests—even if they were looser common interests—and so for many of these participants, a built-in learning community was available. Many participants described having smaller groups or subgroups with which they had their primary affiliation. These clusters of 6-20 people, often with connections to a larger group, helped provide the comfort-level needed to further develop relationships with each other, while having access to additional members for larger actions.

Group Members Provided Different Kinds of Support

Some participants reported that group members provided them different kinds of support. Support can help facilitate learning and change. This community facilitator was mentioned in 29 CIQ responses (53% of the study). Group members providing support were discussed by 16 participants (73%) in the interviews, and 3 participants (75%) during the focus group. The kinds of support varied in this category. Many group members reported that they received emotional support from group members when they felt down or did not know what to do. There were lots of highs and lows during the years participants were involved. Emotional support was important for them; they needed to feel their Indivisible group was a place they could share concerns. Participant 35 found that support from the ‘sisterhood’ she found in her group.

One of the things that is fantastically helpful is having this community of individuals within Indivisible. And I will admit, we are principally women, even though there’s lots of guys.... But we have this sisterhood, because it can’t be called anything else, where we are very supportive of each other, and we lift each other up when we’re in the depths of the funkiness. And even though we all know that things are overwhelming and that things are not going the way we want to, somehow we find somebody within the group. We’ll find the positive, and we will get together either virtually or in person, and move on.... I cannot emphasize enough how that has helped me. You know that community of Indivisible people that I would have never found here otherwise. (Participant 35, Interview)

In her interview, Participant 35 remarked on the emotional highs and lows that can occur within activism. Her supportive group members helped when she was feeling low or overwhelmed.

Some group members supported them with any initiatives they needed assistance with in the context of organizing. Participant 33 discussed group members helping each other and nearby groups. They could rely on them for the projects they wanted to try out. This gave her colleagues the opportunity to run a successful postcard campaign or for her group redesign materials.

It’s great because you can call on somebody who’s not necessarily in the part of Indivisible.... It’s just so easy to call on somebody and say, Hey, can you help us do this? Like, for example, our [nearby] Indivisible group is led by a really good group of people, but one of them is a graphic designer.... And so if we need something in that realm, you

know, we just never hesitate. We'll say, Hey, we're going to ask [redacted] if she can help us, and she'll tell us if she's too busy ... just having people like that with those types of skill sets. It's just been super, and everybody's always willing to help you know, if they call on us, for one thing or another. Like somehow I became a postcard queen. I'm not really sure how that happened. But apparently everybody thinks I'm a postcard person. So if somebody's going to do a postcard initiative, they always come to me first. Like oh, okay, I'll help you with that. (Participant 33, Interview)

Supportive group members would show up to their protests, help out with mailings, walk around together canvassing, or try out their activism ideas. Having a number of participants who supported them and they could rely on helped them to be willing to keep trying new things that interested them. Some participants felt their group members were committed to helping each other, including them as a person. They had support they could draw upon in their own groups.

Some participants were very humbled by the level of support the other Indivisible group members gave them toward their personal goals and interests. One participant was encouraged to run for office by people and ultimately took the plunge. Participant 30 received support from her statewide organizer, as well as two Indivisible founders, when she was running for office.

I'm overwhelmed that people think I can do, you know, I just, it's, it's really humbling. And anytime anybody did anything for me, I was so grateful because I realized no one has to do anything for me. People raised thousands of dollars for me.... They canvassed for me, thousands of hours of canvassing, they knocked doors in my ward. I would just send food, but just be like, okay, are your volunteers your staff? They're hungry. I DoorDashed food. I did everything. I was of course knocking on doors as well. But still. They did that in the [redacted] County Democrats. Oh, and for me, it was just that, and [redacted] canvassing for me. They were there. They were there getting signatures. Everybody did get signatures on my petitions. Because I had to turn in my petitions in July. I had, you know, more than enough to make the ballot, apparently. And that was because people knocked on doors for me. (Participant 30, Interview)

Participant 31 described the Indivisible community as having been a "lifeline" for her. She knew she was with people who did not agree with what was happening and were willing to stand up with her. Participant 32 reported that different Indivisible group members provided her support for group initiatives along the way. This included local members she met and the statewide organizer who provided support in the capacity of a mentor and supported their group

initiatives. Participants were willing to help out other group members whose primary affiliations were smaller sub-groups. When they needed additional participants to pitch in for special events, they were there at the ready. Sometimes the support was at a very high level, with strategy suggestions and tools, including from senior Indivisible leadership. This finding included the many kinds of support available through the participants' Indivisible communities.

Group Discussion and Dialogue Supported Learning

Group discussion and dialogue supported learning for 32 study participants (58%). This includes participants who reported that they learned through dialogue, through discussion groups, through group meetings, and through a series of conversations or talks they had with other activists. This code was referenced in 14 CIQ responses (25%) and 21 interview transcripts (95%). In the focus group, two participants (50%) described this facilitator, and across the CIQs and focus group, three focus group participants (75%) described dialogue as supporting learning. Participant 46 referenced regular discussions that contributed to her learning.

We had interesting discussions about current events, democracy and strategies for future protests and other things we might do.... I've learned so much because we discuss issues every week. I now know so much more of how our government works, how our democracy works. (Participant 46, Interview)

Many of the opportunities for dialogue were at in-person meetings, in smaller groups, or with specific people within their group. Some participants also talked about the virtual ways to talk to other activists that led to learning. Discussion could take place on Zoom or Teams. Some participants learned when they were outside talking to group members who regularly picketed. Other participants had more traditional discussion groups centered around a specific interest area topic. Indivisible groups could include updates or presentations from functional teams; the conversations around their actions or activities led to additional learning for many of them. Participants could ask questions of their group members, brainstorm, generally bounce off ideas,

and ask for advice or feedback. Many participants were interested in following the news regularly and would bring forward current events or proposed policies they wanted to discuss.

Yeah, most of us are news junkies. Like we pay attention to what's going on in the news. And so you pay attention to what's going on in the news, and then you sort of pay attention to well, like, and I feel like this is not a good thing, but we're always countering whatever's happening in the news. You know what I mean? Like we're always against it, it's probably not a good way to live your life, but so then we're like, okay, so we found out well, this is happening here. And this is what people are doing about it. We want to join their effort, you know what I mean? That kind of thing. So we do a lot of that. It's more than just a discussion. It's, we try to find things related to action, you know, action items, but lately, especially since COVID, it's mostly postcard writing. (Participant 31, Interview)

Participant 31 had a regular discussion with her group members, and the group also tried to be making strides forward with action. Participant 32 reported that the discussion led to more: "This is what we're going to work on next year: communicating with people, listening to their ideas and having their ideas evolve into something more than just a conversation."

The combination of writing postcards with discussion was remarked upon by other participants as well. Participant 20 wrote in her CIQ that she felt most connected with other members when they were writing together. In the context of writing postcards, they could talk about their concerns, about politics, and connect about the work and the project they were involved in. The discussion took place while they wrote thousands of postcards, working outside in a member's driveway, preparing for an upcoming election. Some other group members stopped by to pick up cards to write at home; however, the participants who spent time working together valued the opportunity to discuss everything on their mind, while trying to contribute to the larger activism cause. Other participants referenced specific group members or affiliated individuals they would seek out when they wanted to have a conversation about a topic; these discussions helped support their learning and development.

There Was a Place for Everyone, No Matter the Scale or Interest Area

One community facilitator for some participants was feeling there was a place for everyone in the group, no matter the scale or interest area. Within the context of a group, some participants felt like they had a place, even if they could not be involved as much as other people, and even when they were not particularly skilled in an area relevant to the work. This community facilitator of acceptance and room for everyone was mentioned in 22 CIQ responses (40%), 21 interviews (95%), 3 focus group participants (75%), and 33 total study participants (60%).

Some participants thought that anyone could find their place within an Indivisible group; there was always something to do. Participant 30 offered advice if someone was potentially interested in becoming involved in social action work, but did not know how to start.

Just come in and be a sponge initially, and then you'll find your space. There's a space for everybody in Indivisible, and nothing is too small and nothing is too big. It's just a community where you know, no matter what you want to do, there's always something to do. And you will just, you know, absorb so much, you know, election politics expertise, that you'll be a voice. (Participant 30, Interview)

Participant 30 spoke to the variety of interests group members had, and that other members were welcoming of her interests. After being involved for five-plus years, she was now particularly interested in education policy, but she had also worked on many other initiatives.

Indivisible participants were volunteers, with a range of capacities and interests. The participants were not limited to one specific type of work. To some degree, it was up to the participant to decide what they wanted to pursue or what they were comfortable with—which could change over the course of their involvement. Participant 38's activism work benefitted from his Indivisible affiliation, because he was part of a group versus operating solo. He discussed how anyone had the ability to step up within Indivisible if they put in the time.

There was very much if somebody had the willingness to take something on and was going to do it, then they have pretty much free rein to go ahead and make that happen. So, for the most part, that's what I did. (Participant 38, Interview)

Participant 38 was able to put together a robust series with politicians for a specific Congressional seat, and there was a place for him to do this within his group.

Participants described how they could work on large projects, on more than one committee, on projects with other groups, they could sample different things and come as they had the time. There were opportunities in many groups to create new sub-groups or to join special interest groups concerned with topics such as immigration or reproductive rights.

Participant 49 thought that Indivisible was a particularly good organization to consider for new activists, because there was a place for people, regardless of interest or capacity for involvement.

I do suggest that they get involved with Indivisible as our group in particular has these different committees. So if you have specific interests that you want to pursue, like the climate, you can do it and the groups are very welcoming. Sometimes I'll also point them to things that they can do on their own going forward. You can print out five letters at a time and read to people and just encourage them to vote and so that's doing something and starting small. And some people have done that. (Participant 49, Interview)

Some participants thought the leadership was flexible and accepting enough for them to find their place. Participant 36 spoke of such a leader: "She's been a really great leader for us because she's just given us room to move the way we feel like moving, so that's been good."

Participants reported that there was a place for new members in Indivisible, even if they thought their skillset was not particularly applicable to activism. Participant 41 spoke to this:

I think there's, there's always work you can do, even if you think maybe you wouldn't be good at something. There's always other things you can do. There's tons of things that you can do. For example, in my group, right? Okay. My friend who leads the group, she's an attorney. She speaks great. She talks at board meetings, and she knows what she's talking about. And she sounds good. Okay, I talked to a board meeting and I'm like, out of breath, and my face turns red and nervous and I don't like it, and I don't want to always do it. But see, I did like all the research. I'm the one who found all the candidates' websites, and found all this information about them. You can find your spot, your niche. You can find what you're good at, and you can use it. Like researching people on the web and making documents or like, you know, we had a Facebook group. (Participant 41, Interview)

Participant 41 found ways that she could be involved and add value. She knew her research contributed to her friend's talking points in a meeting and was happy to have her group leader be the one to deliver the message.

Participants could change their degree of involvement or focus depending on what was happening in their lives. Their community members would let them be involved with phone calls, postcards, canvassing, or on a specific niche area. Participants mentioned that if they had an interest in Twitter or Facebook, they could concentrate on social media or online posting; there was room for that, too.

Participants Learned from Inspiring Leadership in Their Community

Some study participants reported that they learned from inspiring leadership or leaders within their communities. Fourteen CIQ responses (25%) mentioned inspiring leaders supporting their learning or development. Ten interview participants (45%) reported that leadership had been part of their learning or growth. This facilitator was discussed by one focus group member.

Participant 37 and Participant 30 referenced learning from leaders within Indivisible National; they felt they learned from leadership at the top of the organization. Participants in the Southwest referenced being inspired by their statewide organizer, reporting that she had been instrumental in their learning and development. Participant 11 was one of these participants:

Our statewide organizer is an inspiring firebrand. She has been extremely supportive, has helped with strategy & tools from National, and is masterful at maximizing the impact of Indivisible in [redacted]. I have worked with her on rural strategies (redacted), on experimental campaigns that pushed the envelope, and on basic block-and-tackle field organizing. (Participant 11, CIQ)

The participants that mentioned this organizer had different kinds of groups, personalities, and interests. This statewide organizer was described as being inspiring and helpful to the groups.

Participant 34 and Participant 36 both referenced a state leader they thought was a great leader—someone for people to watch and support in the future. Participant 37 was inspired by the collective leadership in his Indivisible community, and the broader progressive community.

There have always been individuals who have been, in my opinion, just amazing leaders who have great leadership capabilities, and who have been really solid leaders. And that, to me, is the primary reason why [redacted] Indivisible has been as successful as it has been, is because we've had strong leadership throughout.... Although there've been real challenges, the people that I have worked with, who have become that community for me, I have just an incredible amount of respect for them ... the biggest thing that makes them leaders is that they show up. They show up and they care and they are willing to work cooperatively with each other. We're willing to work cooperatively with each other to expand the power that we have here. And so, you know, so much of [redacted] Indivisible has to do with people who are basically self directed, who agree on a direction, and to show up to do the work to manifest the visions ... the ideas that we have for the benefit of our community, and build power in that way to now where we are, you know, the progressive group in this area that people look to when you know, they're looking for information, when they're looking to gather, when they're looking to have community. (Participant 37, Interview)

Participant 37 identified that the leaders were leaders because they showed up, cared, and were willing together to expand their power for the benefit of his local community. He identified that the group had been through different iterations and challenges. The inspiring leaders in his community had helped the group to succeed, continue to exist, and evolve through their commitment to the group and the causes.

Some participants researched the leaders of local Indivisible groups in advance.

Participant 5 selected her group because the leader's ideas and leadership style resonated with her. This is an example of someone new to activism who selected who she might want as a leader, identifying who might be a good fit for their involvement style or learning preferences.

[Redacted] Indivisible was created by 2 women.... Both of these ladies are natural leaders. They not only built up an organization that has its members actively engaged in all aspects of Indivisible's work (canvassing, calling/texting, writing postcards and letters, etc.) but developed leaders to take over for them when they went on to other things.... To me, a leader is one who inspires others to take up his/her mantle when he/she feels the need to go on to something else and leave behind an organization strong enough to withstand that loss. This is exactly what these 2 ladies have accomplished.

[Redacted] Indivisible is just as active today as it was when these 2 ladies were leading it. (Participant 5, CIQ)

Participant 5's leaders ended up moving on—one of them to her state's House of Representatives, and one of them to focus on a Congressional campaign. She was inspired by their leadership as Indivisible group members, as well as what they went on to do. Their examples helped to set up new leaders to move into their roles. As of November 2022, Participant 5 had been involved with Indivisible for 5+ years, had taken on a leadership role herself, and had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement groups since 2017.

Participant 26 reported that one of her group's founders had a "calm, non-guilt inducing leadership style" that appealed to her and was something she emulated when she stepped into a leadership role. The community facilitator of learning from inspiring leadership suggests that leaders had the roles of leading and organizing, as well as contributing to learning and growth within the context of Indivisible groups.

Opportunities with Coalition Groups Facilitated Learning or Development

Sixty percent of the study participants reported that opportunities with coalition groups facilitated their learning or development. This learning facilitator was described in 20 CIQs (36% of the total study). Nineteen interview participants (86%) mentioned having learning facilitated through coalition groups, and this was referenced by all four focus group participants.

Participants mentioned training available through different organizations—some were state-specific, and others were more local. They found out about these coalition opportunities through the context of their Indivisible groups, from being on other mailing lists, from meeting through events, or from becoming involved in multiple groups. Participant 44 developed a passion for text banking and learned from the training provided by coalition groups she had

joined. Some participants learned how to respond to bills and interact with legislative offices through online training. Participant 32 met people who started non-profit civic engagement groups and learned from their programs how to teach young people about the voting process. Participant 35 learned from other coalition group members about how best to support DACA students and what requirements had to be met for their paperwork to be approved. She described young people who went to the ICE website to learn how to prepare the forms—and she was then able to learn and apply their acquired knowledge.

Participant 38 referenced his Indivisible group partnering with climate-specific groups on Senatorial calls, and groups approached the calls differently depending on their group's focus.

So during both Senatorial groups, we've invited a bunch of other climate activist groups to join our calls.... So during our calls, yes I'm representing some members of Indivisible [home group], but I'm also speaking up for other Indivisible groups and like [regional coalition group] ... so it's kind of like a bunch of different activists brought into these calls. And, you know, speaking to some of those issues, and having other people speak to others. We did one climate focused call, which was basically climate organizations from around the state that we assembled. (Participant 38, Interview)

Participant 38 also described how he went to meet with a Senator's aides, with another group's representatives in attendance.

I thought it would be interesting to see it from a different perspective, see it through different groups and sometimes they connect with different people in their office, and that kind of thing. What I found was they were both more thoroughly researched, and I am like I'll go in, and I'll find something, but I don't read through, you know, lots of Congressional material. I don't necessarily read like a whole bill, or something like that, or you know.... So they're much better researched and, and much more granular. They also tend to back off when they're brushed off.... And I'm more likely to say, you know, you're never gonna get 10 Republicans to sign on, so that's a failing strategy. Why would you pursue something that's a failing strategy? So that's just kind of how I think about it. It's like, why would I not tell you this? (Participant 38, Interview)

He was able to see how they expressed their group's interests and concerns and relied on well-researched approaches. Participant 38 had broad professional experience and was pragmatic when it came to his meetings with high-level government staff. He was not scared off by people

in positions of power and was willing to speak up. It is possible that these members being on calls or in meetings with other groups might learn from their conversations or approaches.

Lots of people came, everyone contributed to the effort, the groups collaborated to find great speakers, the press came and it was in all of the local papers. The success of it was a great energizer. I really lean on these events as an opportunity to learn what makes a good event, because many of the groups in the area have been doing this since they started, and are much more experienced. (Participant 54, CIQ)

Participant 54 worked with other groups to hold a rally at her state capitol in frigid weather. The coalition groups working together allowed them to produce a larger event with high-level speakers and more impact. This collaboration could also help with growth and additional learning as group members learned how to manage larger projects than in the past and understand a different scale.

Participants Gained Access to Politicians or Public Figures

Within the context of their Indivisible involvement, some participants gained access to politicians or public figures. This led to learning and development, as they were able to hear directly from the person representing them, understand why they had made the decisions they had, and feel their voices were being heard. Twenty-one participants described this community facilitator, which was 38% of the study participants. With the interview population, 12 participants (55%) reported they had interacted with or learned from politicians or public figures during their period of involvement. One focus group participant described this facilitator (25%).

Indivisible participants learned about politics, how to be an effective citizen, and how to get things done. One way they learned about the political process was through greater exposure to politicians or public figures than they had previously had before Indivisible. Participant 45 referenced their involvement with her group's legislative team.

I have been involved with the Legislative [redacted] Team where we meet with Members of Congress and State legislators. I learned how complicated it is to get new laws passed and how it is not a straight process, but convoluted involving compromises,

holding off, being patient and persistent. I have felt pretty frustrated with the process, but am starting to learn what victories are and at times to trust the process slow as it seems to be. (Participant 45, CIQ)

Participant 45 interacted directly with Congresspeople, state legislators, and their aides. She learned more about how complicated the process was in order to get things done. In the interview, she talked more about how her work included drafting agendas, and including recommendations that other Indivisible group members had recommended. Participant 45 was a co-leader for this team and received suggestions from up to 40 other people; not everyone was involved at once. She could use the Indivisible national site to see what they were prioritizing, draft an agenda, send it out to her lab team, and then figure out which suggestions she could work into the agenda. If she received 20 items, she would have to assess which items should be included at that time, because she wanted the meetings to be effective. In her interview, she explained how she didn't speak at the first few meetings, but that changed:

We realized it was so relaxed, and the aides were really personal with us. And we kind of after a couple times, you kind of get to know them a little bit. And then I felt more comfortable. And for a while when I was doing it, I ended up doing an agenda and then just kind of asking the questions. And then we found it was better to have different members speak to things that were important to them on our agenda. Who wants to take Medicare for All? And somebody would, so we'd had different voices at the meeting. And people who have different things are their passion. (Participant 45, Interview)

Participant 45 had never been involved in this work before and was able to use her organization and communication skills to step into her role on the legislative team. She was able to help amplify other people's voices by soliciting comments, and also making room for group members to speak up about the issues they cared about most.

Participant 32 reported having events at her house for a politician who was running for Congress, and she had worked with them directly. The events to get to know the candidate included one focused on young people and another focused on members of the local Muslim community. Participant 34 put together a luncheon for one of her Senators as a fundraiser and

spoke highly of another Secretary of State: “Oh my gosh, he was so gracious. He came to the little Democratic meeting. He took pictures with us. I brought in friends. I brought my sisters to come here with him.” Participant 33 was the emcee for a town hall with her state’s governor, which is an experience she had never anticipated having. Participant 18 participated in meetings with her state’s senator when she first joined Indivisible. Participant 22 reported that they had met their city representative and school board member through the work. The kinds of interaction and involvement varied, but the interactions gave insight into the political process.

One participant on the West Coast discussed setting up a program that interviewed several politicians, all vying for the same position. This was done on Zoom; the politicians took them seriously. These Zoom recordings were then posted for the public to consider the candidates for their vote in the upcoming election. Participant 48 reported that her State Senator attended an Indivisible meeting and gave a tutorial on how bills moved through the legislative process; she found the process interesting and informative.

I learned how bills are moved through the [redacted state] legislature to become law. The State Senator [redacted] attended our Indivisible meeting and gave us a tutorial on how bills are brought up, sponsored, moved through different cycles in the legislative process to being voted on by both houses and eventually given to the Governor to sign into law. She gave a very detailed lesson about it. I found it so interesting and surprising how complicated the whole process is and that most people have no idea about how this works ... when bills that are in the works are talked about, I now have a better understanding of what’s going on. Because of the knowledge, I can speak to my electeds about legislation I feel strongly about to hopefully influence their votes. (Participant 48, CIQ)

She enjoyed learning about the detailed process, and while she did not retain everything, she gained a greater awareness from this session. Participant 48 felt comfortable speaking with elected officials after her involvement with Indivisible, when she had not previously understood the process. Because of their group affiliation, some participants had an increased level of access, which involved learning from the politicians or public figures.

Resources, Training, and Workshops Supported Learning

Fifty-five percent of the study participants reported that resources, training, and workshops supported their learning. Eighteen CIQ responses (33%) referenced learning from resources or training, and 14 interview participants (64%) reported learning from resources or training in their interviews. Three participants mentioned this in the focus group (75%).

Some of the participants talked about first learning from the Indivisible Guide, and then learning from subsequent materials developed by Indivisible National. The Indivisible Guide was an entry point to initial learning, and participants became interested in gaining understanding.

Indivisible has the Indivisible Guide you know, that [Indivisible founders] put together. It's just so succinct and I'm a rule follower. Just give me a roadmap. And I'll take it as far as you can. You can tell me so. There are so many resources because of Indivisible. We have so many resources available to us. And all we have to do is ask. And they have, you know, the election law resource and policy people, and anything we need to do, they'll know what we need to do. (Participant 30, CIQ)

She reported that Indivisible also provided resources for groups, as well as informative emails, on a regular basis. She knew she could ask for additional help and receive assistance or guides. Participants appreciated understanding how to effectively engage with the government at different levels, and understanding where they could fit into the political process.

Participant 19 and Participant 34 referenced the Truth Brigade, which offers training through Indivisible, so members knew how to communicate effectively online and combat misinformation. This kept group members from getting into arguments online and more effectively communicate their messages.

I love them, love them, love them [in reference to the Truth Brigade]. Well, I found the Truth Brigade as a training. It was [through] Indivisible. And they taught us the truth sandwich, on how to engage and not be belligerent and stuff when crafting your tweets and traffic, and crafting your Facebook posts. They even taught us letters to the editor, and I've been printed quite a bit here. And so they're samples which you could make your own or put your own words in. Those have just been so helpful, and just wonderful. (Participant 34, Interview)

Some training was put on by home groups or external groups in workshops, with both internal and external speakers. Examples of training included social media training, learning how to write press releases, learning how to write letters to the editor, learning how to work with politicians and their offices, learning how to canvas or do other firsthand outreach, and learning how to provide feedback on bills. These have been mentioned throughout the Findings chapter; having available training, workshops, or resources helped to support learning. This often had a community element, as members of each group could set up training. Participant 24 referenced learning how to do press releases and media advisories through a facilitated talk:

Early on (spring 2017), the visionary leader of our very new group had a journalism professor come to a meeting at a coffee shop to teach us how to write media advisories and press releases. They were good instructions and included a couple sample handouts. I used those as a template for years when media advisories became my responsibility. In general, I realized when I joined Indivisible and took on a leadership role that I hadn't had to write anything for public consumption for about 25 years and that my writing and editing skills were weak. I've improved them significantly as a result of my leadership in Indivisible. It is extremely satisfying and a useful skill to be able to write more quickly, more cogently and more persuasively. (Participant 24, CIQ)

Some participants pursued external training that was available online through other groups, so they could then teach this information to others. Leaders also had additional training session opportunities, and some participants opted into those.

Community Impediments to Learning or Development

One of the sub-questions for Research Question 2 was “What has facilitated or impeded their learning or development?” Patterns did not emerge in this category. Part of this likely had to do with the study sample: all of the participants had stayed involved and identified learning. The CIQ did not specifically ask this question. All the reasons for why learning could have been hindered are more relevant to Research Question 1’s sub-question, “What has sustained or hindered their involvement?” The reasons participants had impediments to their learning were

instead factors that hindered involvement. Hindered involvement did not generate additional learning opportunities.

Participant 34 wrote, “Being here with no other Indivisibles is quite lonely. I see all the hard work the teams in other parts of the state accomplish and I must admit I am jealous of their effectiveness, dedication and events they host in their areas.”

This is one example of a participant who had limited opportunities to work with nearby Indivisible groups; isolation did not lead to additional community opportunities. Isolation or loneliness was not referenced broadly across the study; this is likely due to the study sample. Some study participants indicated that opportunities with other groups helped facilitate their learning or growth, so having fewer opportunities for this could theoretically limit their growth. There were no findings for impeding learning or development as a standalone question; due to this, three community impediments to learning and development will be discussed.

Table 22. Community Impediments to Learning and Development

Community Impediments (CI)	Code	Descriptor	CIQ %	Interview %	Focus Group %	Total % of study participants
CI1	NWSE	Not working for the same end or goals	13%	32%	25%	22%
CI2	NEVB	Everyone is busy, limited bandwidth	11%	45%	50%	29%
CI3	NCOV	COVID-19 limited in-person meetings, group lost momentum, social isolation from group	11%	32%	0%	24%

Participants Felt Like They Were Not Working for the Same Ends or Goals

Twenty-two percent of the participants identified a community impediment to learning or development when participants felt they were not working for the same ends or goals. Seven CIQ

responses (13%) and seven interview discussions mentioned the impediment (32%). Only one participant (25%) mentioned this impediment during the focus group discussion. This factor was not significant among the majority of study participants' experiences.

Participants said that when they felt out of sync with group leaders and others, it made moving forward difficult. This included not sharing the same project goal, not having shared or sufficient trust, or having uncomplementary working styles. Participant 39 reported, "So there was this other woman who seemed like a good fit to co-lead with me, but we just, we just didn't click. We tried to. We didn't have the same ideas." It ended up not being a good match for a co-leader relationship because they did not have the same plans for the group. When participants felt they were not trying to accomplish the same thing or if they did not see how they could successfully work together, these hindrances did not lead to a comfortable environment in which to learn or grow.

While Participant 41 made activist friends, she felt that the leadership in her group was not listening to group members who wanted to focus on local election issues.

I have felt disconnected because most of the leaders in my group are retired boomers and I feel that they do not understand younger generations. They tend to get preachy and focus on members taking action, which is not always possible for people who have jobs and children. They tend to undervalue the importance of social media conversations. In the 2022 election, my group was very strict about limiting focus on LOCAL election issues and wanted to stay focused on STATE/FEDERAL election issues because that is the national Indivisible goal. This was in spite of many group members trying to tell them that local issues were just as important, especially with Trumpy candidates running for local seats. The group leaders were stubbornly dug in about it, censored group conversations, and did not communicate their policies very well. This was frustrating. I did try to communicate my feelings to them, but I decided to just let it go as it was a distraction from the important election work that needed to be done. (Participant 41, CIQ)

In her interview, Participant 41 described the many reasons that local politics mattered to her.

Her group seems to be an example of an Indivisible group that was less flexible, and less accepting of different levels of commitment. She was in the 49-56 demographic age range, which

represented 15% of the study participants, and had other responsibilities. Because of the different goals of group members, this did lead to feelings of disconnect at times.

Participant 40 discussed feeling he did not have the same goal as group members, because he thought the chapter should pursue additional members, for example, younger or diverse community members. An excerpt of his description is below.

I said, Well, I think the ticket to this is that we have to start engaging with the Latino community here, which is half the people that live in the city, and we have to. And the other half are mostly Republicans, so we have to get involved with them, and get them thinking about stuff.... Maybe we should bring in somebody from Indivisible who is at the upper ranks. Come down and talk to us about how to do that.... It'd be really great if we had them assign somebody to actually like work with this, because there's a lot of interest, but just no organization. And the response to that was like, oh, I don't know if we can do that, they're not going to want to come to our meetings. They're not going to want to have a bunch of white people telling them what to do. I'm going like, that isn't the way to do that, they'd see what Indivisible could do for them, and with them. Then you tell them about us, and see what we're trying to do, and see if we can work up joint stuff, you know. You don't expect that they're gonna come in, and you don't tell them what to do. You're right. They're not going to accept that. And why should they, you know? (Participant 40, Interview)

Participant 40 explained how the group lost energy, and participants did not want the same thing. They had different perspectives around what would be the best next steps for the group. He ended up staying involved through another Indivisible organizer and related social action group. Because participants were not interested in pursuing new members to help keep the group active, the opportunities for learning and development did not continue with this group. It is possible that had there been additional voices, additional learning could have been facilitated.

Participant 44 was interested in how texting could be used to increase voter turnout and reported that she thought she had different goals from her state's Indivisible leadership.

My passion in organizing is getting out the vote. For me, that involves text messaging and phone banking. My goal was to have a statewide text banking and phone banking operation to help turn [redacted state] Blue! I thought Indivisible would have that same goal.... I got the impression they were more interested in messaging, writing letters to the editor, calling legislators, etc. (Participant 44, CIQ)

Part of the challenge seemed to be around funding and infrastructure costs of her goal. This thematic category includes participants who did not feel they had the same goals as other members or leaders in their communities.

Everyone Was Very Busy and Had Limited Bandwidth

Twenty-nine percent of study participants reported that everyone was busy and had limited bandwidth. Group members being busy was written about in six CIQs (11%) and reported in ten interviews (45%). When considering the interview transcripts along with those participants' CIQ responses, 12 participants (55%) described this as an impediment. Two focus group members (50%) mentioned this challenge. Participant 32 mentioned the challenge of participants calling her back, which could make moving forward with plans difficult.

Getting people to call you back? Dead simple as it is, sometimes I feel like, oh my gosh. People in this day and age are so busy in their jobs and their relationships and whatever that some days it's like, oh, you know, I haven't heard back, and it's been three or four days, I better call. So I tend to bug people, but they're used to it. (Participant 32, Interview)

This thematic category was [really] about how learning and development may be paused when group members cannot be certain other group members or leadership will be able to show up and participate. It can be challenging when group members disengage because of limited bandwidth or spend time on other activities, so the group's goals and plans cannot move forward. One participant referenced being a caregiver and knowing other group members had outside responsibilities. Participant 31 mentioned that some group members had medical issues and some were working full-time and had other responsibilities. Participant 35 reported the challenge of having people attend her rallies: "Sometimes not many people would show up at my rallies and it was disheartening and frustrating and I truly don't know how to have had more come."

Participant 33 identified the challenge of people's limited bandwidth and learned a way to deal with the challenge of her group members being busy.

The one other thing that I've learned too, is I've learned how to set expectations for how many people really are willing to take the time. You get a lot of people say oh, I want to volunteer to do this. I want to volunteer to do that. But then when you actually organize the event for us anyway, 50% of the people show up, no matter what it is, no matter what the event is, no matter how many people sign up. If 100 people sign up, 50 will show up, if 20 people sign up, 10 people will show up every time. And so we've learned to set those kinds of expectations, and not necessarily be disappointed by them. You know we just go into it thinking okay, 50% of people are going to actually come to this, and then we sort of plan around that. (Participant 33, Interview)

Participant 33 had been involved for four years, had taken on a leadership role, and had participated with coalition groups. Her experience planning events led to her realization that only 50% of people who indicated interest would show up. She adjusted her expectations, which helped to temper this potential community impediment. They could still make the events happen; they just could only count on a subset of the people to be involved for a specific date.

Participants missed group members who had needed to withdraw, and since they could no longer regularly interact with them, they would not have the opportunity to learn from them.

COVID-19 Limited In-person Meetings or the Group Lost Momentum Due to Isolation

COVID-19 concerns had limited the in-person meetings. COVID-19 was identified as an impediment to community learning for 24% of study participants, as it caused some groups to lose momentum. Six of the CIQs (11%) referenced COVID-19 disrupting activities or meetings. Seven interview participants (32%), and two focus group participants (50%) reported this issue.

COVID-19 led to one participant's group leader retiring, which affected the progress of their group. Participant 34 mentioned difficulties with their group transitioning to online meetings. Group members were not familiar with using Zoom.

It was also challenging, because it was right at the beginning of COVID. So we had to have our meetings via Zoom. And I have a lot of older people in the group because we're a retirement area here in [redacted]. And so trying to get them to use Zoom was a challenge. (Participant 34, Interview)

Participant 49 referenced Zoom not being as satisfying for group members.

It's really not as satisfying and it's not as good for bringing other people in. You're not having those casual interactions. You know, after meeting people chatting before, the many people chatting, you're not having the kibitzing, you know that goes on. So that is harder and we have to think about, you know, how we're gonna. If we're concerned about the presidential election in a couple of years, we have to get more people involved and ready to act, just you know, on the mailing list, and I'm thinking we need to somehow get younger people cause many of our people are in the 80s. (Participant 49, Interview)

The virtual medium did not offer the same informal interactions and connections that occur at an in-person meeting. While Participant 49's group was back meeting in person and weathered the transition, she identified how recruitment may be necessary in the lead up to the next election.

It was hard with COVID when we're no longer meeting at, you know, at somebody's house, because it used to be that we always met together and then we had to go to Zoom. And I would like to kind of get away from that. But a lot of our people are retired because they have the time to do this stuff. And they're not very comfortable about in person. So. (Participant 47, Interview)

She described how COVID made getting together difficult. Some members in her group did not feel safe about in-person activities due to COVID as well, which changed what a group meeting looked like. This led to a different feel from their initial in-person meetings at a member's house. In her CIQ, Participant 54 reported that her co-leader would sometimes decline activities by saying, "There's too much covid going around." She did not know if regular excuses related to COVID or because she did not want to be involved. COVID was a real health challenge, as well as a new variable that changed the look and feel of Indivisible groups.

For some participants, their group's overall engagement decreased, and potential learning and development slowed. Many participants who referenced COVID-19 as an impediment were able to adapt in their groups and had resumed in-person activities by the time of the study in late 2022. Future virus outbreaks may pose a problem for social action group involvement.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the learning and changes, and community facilitator and impediment research findings. The Learning and Changes section focused on the findings specific to Research Questions 2 and 3. This chapter included the eleven learning and changes findings: (1) Participants learned how to be an effective citizen, and get things done in the public sphere; (2) Participants learned about activism and how to organize; (3) Participants learned about health, social, political, education, and environmental issues; (4) Participants learned to contribute and use prior knowledge in a new setting; (5) Participants learned to create community and work together; (6) Participants had increased consciousness; (7) Participants experienced leadership and personal development; (8) Participants ventured out of their comfort zone and gained confidence; (9) Participants felt empowered through the work; (10) Participants became more assertive; and (11) Participants became more political and politically engaged.

Three learning and changes findings reported were experienced by over 70% of the study participants. The three most significant findings were: Participants learned about activism and how to organize (76% of the total study); Participants learned how to be an effective citizen and get things done in the public sphere (71% of the total study); and Participants reported having increased consciousness (71% of the total study).

The chapter also addressed the Research Question 2 (Q2) sub-question and Research Question 3 (RQ3) sub-question, and focused on the community facilitators (9) for learning and development, and the community impediments (3) to learning and development.

There were nine learning facilitators: (1) Community relationships and friendships facilitated learning; (2) Participants felt comfortable with like-minded people; (3) Group members provided different kinds of support; (4) Group discussion and dialogue supported

learning; (5) There was a place for everyone, no matter the scale or interest area; (6) Participants learned from inspiring leadership in their community; (7) Opportunities with coalition groups facilitated learning or development; (8) Participants gained access to politicians or public figures; and (9) Resources, training, and workshops supported learning.

These three most significant community facilitators were: CF1. Community Relationships or Friendships (64% of study participants); CF7. Opportunities with coalition groups facilitated learning and development (60% of study participants); and CF4. Group discussion and dialogue supported learning (58% of study participants).

There were three community impediments that hindered learning. The most significant was that 29% of study participants reported members being busy with limited bandwidths.

Chapter 6 will analyze the most prevalent factors and discuss the Chapter 4 and 5 findings in conjunction with the literature.

Chapter 6: Analysis, Interpretations, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This study was focused on the new activists who became involved in Indivisible, a new organization, doing social action work for at least two years from 2017 to 2020. The purpose was to understand more about the factors that sustained their involvement, what they learned through their participation, and the role of community in their learning and changes. This chapter includes a summary of outstanding findings and an exploration of how the findings align with the literature. The balance of the chapter includes recommendations for new activists, social action groups, educators, and for future research, followed by the researcher's reflections.

Interview data collection began by asking participants to walk the researcher through how they felt after the November 2016 election. Respondents described being affected in varying degrees and ways—from nervous concern to depression to shock. Anxious about what was coming, for some, unease started after the inauguration. This study offers a snapshot into the lives of people who ranged from feeling distressed to being vehemently opposed to the stated Trump administration policies and objectives. They changed their regular behaviors by engaging in new activities by joining Indivisible. Their involvement consisted of taking on additional responsibilities, engaging in dialogue, planning and taking action, staying attentive to news, and learning in new and different roles within the context of a developing organization.

With Indivisible, this study represents people who largely did not know each other; the involvement itself led to meeting new people in a new community. Some participants met people with whom they did not mesh well. For most participants, however, this involvement created

opportunities in which they met like-minded people with whom they genuinely connected and enjoyed knowing, working and learning with and from. Participants developed friendships and relationships with people they report they would not have otherwise met. These connections varied in depth and breadth. Sometimes the new relationships led to deep respect or an appreciation that these new colleagues were giving their time and energy to the same causes. Participants liked knowing they could learn from their fellow Indivisible members, and they also found meaning and purpose by being able to add value themselves. It made some feel they were a part of something greater, less alone, by becoming part of a group actively choosing action for change and hope, rather than staying alone and choosing inaction and worry.

Kegan (1982) wrote that in his view, the holding environment “is an idea intrinsic to evolution. There is not one holding environment early in life, but a succession of holding environments, a life history of embeddedness” (p. 116). Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2015) described communities of practice “in a nutshell” as “groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (p. 2). While learning can be a reason communities develop, communities of practice could also be “an incidental outcome of member’s interactions” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Treyner, 2015, p, 2). Wenger (2000) discussed how communities of practice “offer an opportunity to negotiate competence through an experience of direct participation” (p. 229). Indivisible groups served as both communities of practice and holding environments for many new activists from 2017 to 2020. Participants could learn together in a safe space, feeling they were valued and contributing to a cause, or causes important to them, while gaining competence. They were “learning by doing,” and their groups were “about” something that kept them together (p. 4). The opportunity to contribute through many kinds of actions or participation in a supportive

environments led to both learning as well the development of leadership capabilities. Because there was not a set hierarchy at the beginning, people who joined early on may have had more opportunity to take on a leadership role than if they had joined a more established group with more defined protocols, roles, and responsibilities. New activists could help create a group that worked for them, their group members, their interests, and their locale. As of this writing, new groups may continue to be created.

Summary of Outstanding Findings

This section includes a summary of outstanding findings related to three main areas: the factors for sustained involvement, the participants' learning and changes, and the role of community in facilitating learning or change. The sustained involvement findings include the factors for sustained involvement, the sub-factors contributing to sustained involvement, and the factors for hindered involvement. The learning and changes findings include several kinds of learning and development reported by study participants. Community factors facilitated learning in many ways and, in some cases, may have hindered potential learning. Percentage information is included for an understanding of the frequency of certain factors and facilitators.

Sustained Involvement

There were eight identified factors for sustained involvement, seven sub-factors that helped sustain involvement, and three factors that hindered involvement. Seven of the sustained involvement factors were significant in that at least half of the interview participants referenced them across the interview and CIQ. Starting with the most significant factors, study participants stayed involved in Indivisible because of community members. Sixty percent of the total study participants reported that committed community members and relationships with Indivisible members kept them involved (n=33); this increased to 91% when considering only the interview

participants (n=20). This included, and was not limited to, developing friendships, having an admiration for other members and their work, not wanting to let them down, and having reasons to see and work with them.

Some participants cited their faith, belief system, or their feeling of duty to remain involved, while some explicitly said that quitting was not an option. Fifty-five percent of all study participants (n=30) and 100% of interview participants at least partially stayed involved because of a sense of duty and values (n=22). Participants also identified that they were making a difference and thought that more was possible, with 76% of study participants (n=42) and 91% of interviews reporting this reason for staying involved (n=20). The most significant factors for the sustained involvement were committed community members and relationships, having duty or conviction around the work, and having success and belief in the impact of the work.

The next three most significant factors for sustained involvement were participants staying involved because they were motivated by the opposition, having emotional engagement and passion for the work, and having increased consciousness. Being motivated by the opposition was reported by 49% of study participants (n=27) and by 95% of interview participants (n=21). Emotional engagement or passion for the work was referenced by 45% of study participants (n=25) and 82% of interview participants (n=18). Increased consciousness was described by 42% of study participants (n=23) and 77% of interview participants across their interview and CIQ (n=17).

Participants feeling like they had a purpose or meaning was referenced by 36% of the total study (n=20) and 59% of interview participants across the CIQ and interview (n=13). The least reported factor was participants feeling their identity had changed to be aligned with the

work, which was reported by 25% of the total study (n=14) and 45% of the interview participants across the CIQ and interview (n=10).

There were seven sub-factors that helped sustain participant involvement. These were not the primary factors for being involved, but sub-factors that helped participants stay involved. The three most reported sub-factors were Indivisible's flexible format; supportive family members and friends; and the recognition that they were one person among many. Forty percent of study participants mentioned Indivisible's flexible format and having supportive family and friends (n=22). Thirty-one percent of study participants indicated that they had the realization of being one person among many (n=17). These sustaining sub-factors of Invisible's flexible format, supportive friends or family, and "it takes a village" helped participants stay involved.

Involvement was supported when there were things a participant wanted to be a part of or accomplish in the future (24% of the total study, n=13). Participants who felt they were appreciated and/or received validation were reported by 22% of the study participants (n=12). The two last sustaining subfactors of taking breaks from activism, and having hope and elections to work toward, were both reported by 18% of study participants (n=10).

There were three factors that hindered involvement, and the response rates were low enough that the researcher would only call one of them significant. Thirty-six percent of the study participants expressed that burnout, or feeling overwhelmed, with duties exceeding their energy or capacity was a factor that could decrease participation (n=20). This factor was referenced by 64% of interview participants across their CIQs and interview (n=14). The other two factors of group dynamics or issues with group members (20% of the study, n=11) and disagreement with values and approaches (33% of the study, n=18) were less significant.

This study identified eight factors for sustained involvement, seven sub-factors that helped sustain involvement, and three factors that hindered involvement. Each sustained involvement factor, facilitator, or impediment was reported by ten or more participants, which may be enough for new activists, organizations, and educators to take note. The most significant factors for sustained involvement were committed community members and relationships; feeling a duty to be involved; and making a difference and thinking more was possible.

Learning and Changes

This study identified eleven learning and changes findings; there were three learning and changes findings that were experienced by over 70% of the study participants. The three most significant findings were: participants learned about activism and how to organize (76% of the study, n=42); participants learned how to be an effective citizen and get things done in the public sphere (71% of the study, n=39); and participants reported having increased consciousness (71% of the study, n=39). These findings increased to the 91-95% range when considering the interview transcripts. It may seem evident that participants would learn about activism and how to organize by joining a group like Indivisible. This finding included a range of activism learning the participants gained through their involvement in Indivisible activities. Learning to be an effective citizen and get things done encompassed learning about democracy, government procedures, and other ways to engage with the civic realm effectively. Increased consciousness included a greater awareness about their positionality in the United States, consciousness around disenfranchised groups, and an awareness that not everyone wanted voting rights for all. The kinds of consciousness varied. For many participants with sustained involvement in Indivisible from 2017 to 2020, their levels of consciousness had increased, and they were aware of more societal issues than before. Increased consciousness contributed to sustained involvement.

Participants learned how to create community and work together (56% of study participants, n=31), which increased to 82% when considering only the interview transcripts (n=18). This finding encompassed participants reporting that they learned to work in collective leadership and to work together in a completely new area. Fifty-one percent of study participants reported experiencing leadership and personal development (n=28), which was referenced in 55% of the interviews (n=12). Participants learned how to contribute and use prior knowledge in a new setting (45% of the study participants, n=25), which was reported in 86% of the interviews (n=19). The learning was not focused on just how to work together and improve oneself: participants learned subject-matter information about health, social, political, educational, and environmental issues, with 47% of study participants referencing learnings they had specific to these areas (n=26).

Slightly less reported, and still worth noting, are the findings that some participants ventured out of their comfort zone and gained confidence (33% of the total study, n=18); became more empowered (49%, n=27); became more assertive (45%, n=25); and become more political or politically engaged (42%, n=23). These percentages represent total study participants. The changes were meaningful for the participants in their discussion and descriptions of them.

Overall, the most significant learning and changes findings were participants learning to be effective citizens and get things done in the public sphere; learning about activism and how to organize; having increased consciousness; learning how to create community and work together; and experiencing leadership and personal development.

The Role of Community in Supporting Learning or Impeding Learning

This study identified nine community facilitators that led to learning and development. The three most significant community learning facilitators are: 60% of study participants

reported that community relationships and friendships helped facilitate their learning; 91% of the interview participants reported this in their CIQs and interviews. Community relationships and friendships led to learning and sustained involvement. Opportunities with coalition groups facilitated learning and development (60% of participants, n=33); 86% of interview participants referenced coalition groups across the interviews and their CIQs (n=19). Group discussion and dialogue supported learning (58% of participants, n=32); 95% of interview participants had their learning supported by discussion or dialogue (n=21).

Study participants had their learning supported by feeling comfortable with like-minded people (58% of study participants, n=32); receiving different kinds of support from their group members (64% of the study, n=35); and believing there was a place for everyone, no matter the scale and interest (60% of the study, n=33). The last community learning facilitators were that participants learned from inspiring leadership in their community (45% of study participants, n=25), and participants gained access to politicians and public figures (38% of total participants, n=21).

There were three community impediments that hindered learning; the response rates were low enough that the researcher would only call one of them significant. Twenty-nine percent of the study participants expressed that everyone was busy and had limited bandwidth (n=16). This factor was referenced by 55% of the interview participants across their interviews and CIQs (n=12). COVID-19 limiting in-person meetings or the group losing momentum was referenced by 24% of study participants (n=13). Finally, participants not working for the same end or goal was reported as a potential community issue by 22% of study participants (n=12).

With the exception of participants learning from inspiring leadership in their community, and participants gaining access to politicians or public figures, the rest of the community

learning facilitators were reported by over half of all study participants. These will be discussed in the Recommendations section, as these community learning facilitators have implications for organizations, future activists, and educators.

Analysis and Interpretations in Light of the Literature

This section includes an analysis of the findings of the study in light of the literature and will concentrate on the most reported factors for involvement, learning and changes findings, and related facilitators. The learning and changes identified from this study are focused on the study of individuals who met the requirements that they were new activists for at least two years from 2017 to 2020 in a new organization. Recognizing that a lot was new for the self-selected participants in the study, the kinds of learning or the role of community for this study group may be applicable to other persons or groups.

One significant finding of the study was participants' increased consciousness, which was a learning opportunity and a motivator. Participants reported having increased consciousness as a way they changed (75% of total study, n=41), and a reason for commitment (42% of total study, n=23). Increased and critical consciousness are discussed in the literature and have been core ideas to the field of adult education (Brookfield, 2014; Freire, 1993). Ollis (2012) wrote about an activist's sense of purpose, stating "they cannot observe inequality and not be moved by it" (p. 179). Costa et al. (2021) wrote about how professional activists learned "critical, social and political consciousness" (p. 226). Farago et al. (2018) found that social action involvement could foster critical consciousness and offer the opportunity for praxis (p. 167). This study describes the learning/change as "increased consciousness." While some participants *did* reach the point of critical consciousness in which they had critiqued societal structures, identified their positionality, and were open to larger change, many participants had increased consciousness,

were more aware, and wanted to promote democratic practices without necessarily seeking large-scale change. This is in accord with the researcher's understanding of the participants who offered examples of their increased consciousness, which helped keep them involved.

Increased consciousness reported through involvement in the 2017-2020 timeframe may be considered in the context of earlier adult schools or groups. Greenberg (2013) wrote about adult schools for social justice and how "these schools emerged as an alternative educational experience to develop political consciousness and participation in social movements" (p. 667). One example, "freedom schools," supported the aims of the Civil Rights movement (Greenberg, 2013, p. 667). Myles Horton, co-founder of the Highlander School, was less interested in the methodology around learning, and more around the process involving the total person (Horton & Jacobs, 2003, p. xiii). Learning was tied into the process of doing, with social action efforts continuously being made and remade (p. xx). Thayer-Bacon (2004) wrote that Horton "helped to develop an adult education center that serves as an excellent example of a democracy always-in-the-making" (p. 18). The education was not limited to a session, a seminar, a class, or a series. The person continued to learn and grow in the act of living itself, of interacting with others, with trying things out, and then trying them again. Justice schools offered "a safe space for the discussion of controversial ideas in a participatory classroom that included an emphasis on public speaking rooted in collaborative, rather than competitive, relationships" (Greenberg, 2013, p. 668). Indivisible groups served as similar spaces in which the participants could work together and talk about opportunities for improving conditions. Different kinds of learning took place, there was no set educational path or course, and there would be no credential at the end.

In 1967, Horton (2003) stated, "We believe that you can only learn if you are trying to get answers to a problem. You can't learn unless you have a reason for learning and want to

learn” (p. 5). Knowles et al. (2014) summarized Lindeman’s assumptions about adult learners; adults pursue learning when there are needs or interest, the learning would inform those, and learning is life-centered (p. 22). This involves becoming more informed about what was happening: learning the facts and ramifications of proposed and actual policies and laws, the procedures for making changes, and how to get those in power to pay attention to their concerns. Participants in the study continued to learn about activism and how to organize (76% of study, n=42) because they had identified a problem with the direction of the country, the leadership, decisions being made, or other reasons. They were motivated by the opposition (49% of total study, n=27) and felt a duty to stay involved (55% of total study, n=30). The learning and leadership development that took place in Indivisible groups occurred because there was a problem participants wanted to solve.

Indivisible groups were organic and spontaneous as they developed. The space in which they operated varied: people’s homes, libraries, community centers, online, gardens or driveways, outside while picketing, diners, and more. Variable spaces and approaches are examples of Indivisible’s flexible format, and the flexible format was reported as a facilitator for sustained involvement by 40% of study participants (n=22). What each Indivisible chapter looked like seemed to evolve over the course of the interview participants’ periods of involvement and the group’s needs. Similar to the justice schools, involvement over time led to opportunities for increased awareness, learning, and praxis within local groups or subgroups.

Thayer-Bacon (2004) wrote that Horton “wanted to find ways to help poor, rural people in the South, and particularly in Tennessee, become empowered to think and act for themselves and change their lives” (pp. 7-8). Participation in Indivisible led to 49% of participants (n=27) becoming more empowered. The participants in the study had different backgrounds and did not

indicate they were trying to change their own lives, though this happened in the process. Many earlier adult schools for social justice were geared toward immigrants and low-income workers. This poses an interesting question: How do you get more people involved in social action efforts if they might have benefitted from current and past societal structures? What is the best entry point? For some new activists, Indivisible was a way they could become involved; when they showed up, they felt they were with like-minded people. They could wrestle with difficult topics and consider ways to change what they considered to be unjust conditions or policies in the United States. Indivisible members did not have to identify as progressive when they joined. Some study participants stated that they did not identify as progressive. Indivisible's group registration website now has four items new group leaders must agree to, and one of them is "2. Embrace progressive values. We model inclusion, respect, and fairness in all of our actions" (Indivisible group registration page, 2024).

Some participants who were reluctant to be part of what they perceived as 'left,' were comfortable meeting with other people, engaging in the educational offerings, and talking about learning from Indivisible. While Indivisible groups did not necessarily have the transformational aims of adult schools for social justice, they did serve as a space in which people could have their consciousness increased. Once their consciousness had increased, they were more likely to keep showing up, because having that knowledge and sitting back, not taking action, did not feel right. This relates directly to staying involved due to increased consciousness: recognizing the need for action. This study also identified that participants stayed involved because of a sense of duty and values; quitting was not an option, which was a factor for 55% of study participants (n=30).

Kilgore (1999) wrote,

A theory of collective development and learning involves both individual and group components. Individual components presented here are identity, consciousness, sense of agency, sense of worthiness and sense of connectedness. . . . In a model of collective development individual identity is not only one's perception of self as unique from other individuals and groups, but also interdependent with other individuals and groups. (pp. 196-197)

The study participants' growing consciousness related to an awareness of the conditions in the U.S., how certain groups were spoken about and treated, and that people they knew were supportive of the country moving toward what they viewed as a regressive direction. Kilgore (1999) discussed how consciousness for an individual added experience to identity, and "as individuals increasingly perceive ourselves as actors based on previous purposeful actions, we begin to imagine ourselves as agents who are able to make things happen in the future" (p. 197). Some of the participants' belief in self came from a realization of what they were capable of accomplishing based on past actions, which could lead to them feeling empowered (49% of total study, n=27), and experiencing leadership or personal development firsthand (51% of total study, n=28). They saw themselves as being affiliated with a specific group—in this case, Indivisible, which influenced their consciousness of both their individual and collective places within society, as well as their sense of selves and what they were capable of doing.

In conversation with their group members, participants were able to learn and develop together. Group discussion supported learning, with 58% of the study participants reporting that their learning was supported by discussion or dialogue (n=32). This increased to 95% when considering the interview participants (n=21). Discussion groups were places in which group members provided support, with like-minded people (58% of total study, n=32). Many adult learning theorists have identified the importance of dialogue and holistic thought for learning (Daloz et al., 1996; Freire, 1998; Horton & Jacobs, 2003; Schön, 1987b), as well as discussion

groups (Daloz et al., 1996; Lindeman, 1945). Brookfield and Preskill (2009) stressed the necessity of dialogue so each community member could express their needs and concerns, help community members know each other, and address shared interests (p. 151). Ganz (2009) identified dialogue as an aspect of community that could facilitate learning or growth.

Opportunities for discussion existed for many participants in their regular group meetings, subcommittees, or action groups. Participants could ask clarifying questions and ascertain the next priorities and best uses of their efforts. Some participants could talk to others with more experience. With Indivisible, this could be their statewide organizer or an experienced activist in their group. Other times, new members were knowledgeable about a specific area; having that discussion could help them more effectively approach their work. When group members offered thoughts and ideas, participants could reflect and consider how the identified challenges or needs of community members could be addressed. Dialogue took place with participants interacting with coalition groups on common projects or in workshops or training, and when participants worked to support other members of their communities (e.g., DACA students). Sometimes discussions were related to perspectives expressed by public figures like Rachel Maddow or Heather Cox Richardson, politicians at press conferences, and others in the news. Initiating discussions of current events expanded topics for the group members. Dialogue was a direct source of learning; sometimes the learning was what they shared in common, other times it opened up a new way of seeing things.

Ganz (2009) identified community relationships as being helpful for learning, as did Indivisible co-founders Greenberg and Levin (2019) in their interviews with Indivisible group members. Gose and Skocpol (2019) found that some Indivisible participants reported close friendships, attachment between participants, an appreciation for their community, and learning

both about themselves and their world (p. 301). This study found that community members were a primary reason for sustained participation and commitment (60%, total study), as well as a primary facilitator of learning (64% of the total study, n=35). They provided different kinds of support (64% of the total study, n=35). Friendships developed over the course of common experiences and in-person meetings, because of shared roles within the group, and outside gatherings and communication unrelated to activism. Learning was often informal or non-formal learning.

Non-formal and informal learning opportunities exist within the context of volunteer and social action work (Costa et al., 2021; Ollis, 2012; Stowe, 2013). Akingbola et al. (2013) described informal learning as “the learning that happens in spaces and places that are not necessarily governed by curricula, degrees, experts and timelines; it is learning that can be intentional, unintentional or through socialization” (p. 67). The Indivisible participants were unpaid volunteers. This was the milieu in which the learning occurred for study participants. As a result, they could choose what activity they might like to pursue, rather than being restricted to specific activities within a traditional paid position. In the context of a study of Red Cross volunteers, their informal learning occurred through either “a) tacit or incidental learning that volunteers acquire by observing or being guided by others; and b) learning by experience that occurs as a result of volunteers performing the required tasks” (Akingbola et al., 2013, p. 73). Participants in this study learned from watching each other, receiving guidance and support from each other, and pursuing tasks or actions together.

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) discussed three important characteristics within a community of practice of “the domain” in which participants have a “shared domain of interest.... They value their collective competence and learn from each other”; “the community”;

and “the practice” (p. 2). For a community of practice to develop, it includes sustained involvement over time, and shared resources and problem-solving experiences (p. 2). Indivisible communities and the relationships within them also relate to Schön (1987b) and his descriptions of how professionals could form a community of practitioners who engage in meaning-making to form a community of practice. Sixty percent of study participants identified that there was a place for everyone within a group (n=33). With Indivisible, a new organization at the time many of them joined, they could create their own communities of practice around what it meant to be an Indivisible chapter, group leader, or participant. Some participants developed a sophisticated understanding of the political process, ran for office, or took on more public positions adjacent to Indivisible, while others did not have those aims. Wenger (2000) identified three elements that offer structure within social learning systems: “communities of practice, boundary processes among these communities, and identities as shaped by our participation in these systems” (p. 226). Study participants reported that they valued the opportunity for connections across Indivisible groups and with coalition groups. Forty-five percent of the interview participants (n=10) referenced their identity changing to be aligned with the work.

Wenger (2000) described how there are three kinds of belonging within a social learning system: engagement, imagination, and alignment (pp. 227-228). These all relate to the experiences that participants described within the study. For engagement, participants were working things together, participating in activities as a group, and learning “what we can do and how the world responds to our actions” (p. 227). Through their commitment over time, they started to identify the impact of their involvement, and the impact of activists around the country. Some participants mentioned that they had not been involved in college, when they thought many people became involved in social action work. They were grateful to be involved now.

This did not have to be a ‘young person’s work.’ Social action participation offered the opportunity to rethink their own possibilities and plans.

Imagination as a mode of belonging includes “constructing an image of ourselves, of our communities, and the world, in order to orient ourselves, to reflect on our situation, and to explore possibilities” (Wenger, 2000, pp. 227-228). Wenger writes, “These images of the world are essential to our sense of self and to our interpretation of our participation in the social world” (p. 228). Indivisible founders provided a vision for possibilities and served as “conveners” in that way. Indivisible participants had the invitation to be part of the ongoing co-creation of what it meant to have a local group, while also providing feedback to leadership about what their groups valued. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2014) wrote what conveners “propose is not just a vision. It is a new narrative about the landscape, its potential, and people’s identities in it” (p. 25). Within this construct, Indivisible members could not be expected to just enact the goals of the founders. There had to be room for the vision to be co-created: “Waiting for people to live it does not work. Telling the narrative must be an invitation to a variety of stakeholders to share in its creation” (p. 26). Indivisible encouraged creativity in groups (Greenberg & Levin, 2019), and with the flexible format, participants could try out different ideas. Indivisible was a new organization, and members could create their own communities of practice around what it meant to be an Indivisible chapter, group leader, or participant.

The third mode of belonging, alignment, is defined by Wenger (2000) as “a mutual process of coordinating perspectives, interpretations, and actions so they realize higher goals” (p. 228). Study participants went through the process of working in a community to come to mutual understandings of the political landscape, the best courses of action for their Indivisible group, and how they wanted to concentrate efforts. Reaching alignment was not a one-off

process, but instead something recalibrated along the way with the other modes of belonging. Twenty-four percent of participants indicated that there continued to be things they wanted to be a part of or to accomplish in the future (n=13). This was a sustaining sub-factor, and part of this was continuing to work on shared goals and visions with group members. One example of a space in which participants could work toward alignment was the study finding that 41% of interview participants were motivated by hope, and elections, which create hope (n=9, across methods). They had limited resources and time to work toward election ‘events,’ and had to coordinate perspectives and actions to achieve their political goals.

Study participants referenced learning how to work together to create this new community; this experience was reported by 56% of the total study participants (n=31), and 82% of the interview participants (n=18). This experience of navigating new terrain, and putting in the necessary work to fill in knowledge gaps, may have helped strengthen the community ties that so many study participants referenced. They were building together. Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2014) wrote, “Boundaries of practice are unavoidable. A practice of any depth requires a sustained history of social learning, and this creates a boundary with those who do not share this history” (p. 6). The participants were involved in groups during a specific window, and over time they developed shared history. They learned what worked in their area and context, became familiar with local rules and norms, and developed knowledge about how to be an effective citizen in the public sphere (71% of total participants, n=39).

Bandura’s (2001) discussion of collective agency related to how community led to sustained involvement. Bandura (2000) wrote about how social cognitive theory “extends the conception of human agency to collective agency. Participants shared beliefs in their collective power to produce desired results are a key ingredient of collective agency” (p. 75). Brookfield

(1987a) wrote about how participants working together in collective action may recognize that they have more power as part of a “political movement or pressure group” (p. 52). Greenberg and Levin (2019) emphasized the importance of groups and partnerships to Indivisible, writing, “In the same way that a group has more power than an individual, coalitions and partners have more power than any single group” (p. 141). Indivisible participants knew that certain political staffers would communicate with and listen to them because they were part of Indivisible. The participants were able to collaborate with group members who brought their skillsets and values, which then created a belief in collective agency. Bandura (2000) described how many things that people are striving toward “are achievable only through interdependent efforts. Hence, they have to work together to secure what they cannot achieve on their own” (p. 75). Participants reported that knowing they were one person among many helped them stay involved, with 31% of the study participants (n=17) and 45% of the interview participants referencing this understanding across methods (n=10). Participants were drawn to working with group members out of friendship, understanding that together they would accomplish more with these valued community ties.

One of the leadership tasks in Brookfield and Preskill’s (2009) *Learning as a way of leading: Lessons from the struggle for social justice* is “Learning democracy.” The title has been adapted here to discuss a kind of learning focused on the participants learning how to be an effective citizen and how to get things done in the public sphere (71% of participants, n=39). At its core, this involved learning how to participate in the political process as a citizen, as well as a person learning how to implement change through activism (76% of participants, n=42). Learning about activism and organizing was a direct result of becoming involved in social action activities (Ganz, 2009; Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Horton & Jacobs, 2003). Participants learned how

to organize and get permits for a rally, how to effectively communicate with their representatives' staff, how to set up canvassing for a neighborhood, how to offer feedback on bills, and how candidates could get on a ballot, among other things. They became active participants in the democratic process by registering people to vote, and by being agents of activism through campaigns. Workshops, resources, and training contributed to learning for 55% of study participants (n=30). The resources were often specific to learning how to organize, becoming active participants in the political process, or learning more about civics and how the government works. Learning about civics in adulthood is important, because civic learning has been deemphasized in schools (Winthrop, 2000). This resource scaffolding had the potential to support participant learning as well as their group's learning. Coalition organizations also helped facilitate learning for 60% of study participants (60% of total study), through resources or collaboration opportunities (n=33).

Thirty-three percent of participants reported getting out of their comfort zone and becoming more confident (n=18). Ollis (2012) discussed "the learning edge," with participants in her study using phrases like "on a huge journey" or "out of my comfort zone" (p. 132). They, too, experienced the learning edge by trying new things and pushing themselves. Similar to the Ollis study, in which circumstantial activists gained knowledge "at an extraordinary pace," the Indivisible activists who participated in the interviews all described a minimum of five learnings or changes. The participants were supported by group members as they challenged themselves to learn how to organize and get things done; they knew they could debrief each other afterwards. Sixty-four percent (n=35) of the participants reported having supportive group members. This support also extended beyond Indivisible, with 40% of participants reporting having family or friends who were supportive of their activism (n=22).

Schön (1987a) explained a predicament that occurs when a person is learning something brand new: “A student cannot at first understand what he needs to learn, can learn it only by educating himself, and can educate himself only by beginning to do what he does not yet understand” (p. 93). This specific period from 2017 to 2020, when participants were learning to become new activists, was an example of learners not yet understanding what they needed to learn until they became active participants. There was an abundance of activism-related activities and pro-civic engagement activities available to them; they could learn in the context of trying out different activities. This relates directly to modeling, scaffolding, and vicarious verification (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) wrote that “modeling has been shown to be a highly effective means of establishing abstract or rule-governed behavior,” with people learning “judgmental orientations” and “standards of conduct” as just two examples (p. 42). The participants watched each other in activities, for example, canvassing, and were then able to start to engage in the same behavior. From participant accounts, observational learning and then the opportunity for action were important for gaining competency for activities over time. Hansman (2011) explained, “Behavioral modeling allows learners to observe performance of an activity by experienced members of a community, while cognitive modeling allows experienced members to share 'tricks of the trade' with newer members” (p. 47). Forty-five percent of participants reported learning from inspiring leadership in the community (n=25). Indivisible participants were able to both observe the activities and actions of activism, while also receiving the “tricks of the trade” from Indivisible National and other role models. These role models can “provide scaffolding, which takes the form of physical aids, modeling tasks, and coaching” (p. 47). This scaffolding was available in activism both with more experienced activists and mentors, as well

as less experienced members who modeled tasks and offered coaching, even if they were new to the activity.

With vicarious verification, Bandura (1986) wrote that “observing the effects produced by somebody else’s actions serves as a way of checking one’s own thoughts” (p. 511).

Participants started to see how others were doing in this new activist space. This led to an assessment of the participant’s own capabilities, depending “on how well others perform in similar situations” (p. 511). Some participants learned they had no interest in canvassing and decided to direct their activism work to other areas. Other participants embraced it. The participants learned about activism and how to organize within the context of the direct action work. As they developed a more sophisticated understanding of the work possibilities and the ways to contribute, they could become more focused and selective. They were able to start identifying what they needed to learn, where their knowledge gaps were, and where they may have new and unexpected capabilities.

The regular opportunities for experiential learning led to 67% of participants having successes, feeling they were making a difference, and thinking more was possible (n=37). Ganz (2009) wrote, “When we have small successes, they can enhance our creativity, in part because they generate greater motivation” (p. 13). Participants were involved with various actions, and they understood they were part of a larger movement. With their successes, participants considered greater possibilities. The firsthand experiences created their personal investment and buy-in. The learning, involvement, and community experiences contributed to 59% of interview participants feeling they had a meaning or purpose (n=13). Considering the entire study, 36% of the participants reported feeling like they had a meaning or purpose (n=20). Ollis (2012) discussed how purpose is a part of the activist identity. Ganz (2009) wrote, “The research also

shows that the intrinsic rewards associated with doing work one loves to do, work one finds inherently meaningful, are far more motivating than extrinsic rewards” (p. 13). Participants may have felt called to additional commitment or involvement through the intrinsic rewards they received from engaging in meaningful work.

Beyerlein and Ryan (2018) identified that some participants in activism became involved because of an emotional response to the election. Researchers have also identified the importance of emotional engagement and emotional connection in participants staying involved in social action work (Angelique & Culley, 2014; Corrigan-Brown, 2011; Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Ollis, 2012). Forty-five percent of the study participants reported that emotional engagement and passion for the work led to their sustained involvement (n= 25). This was 82% of the interview participants (n=18). Emotional engagement was an important factor in participants staying involved with Indivisible activities. Ollis (2008) wrote that activists may refer to emotions as “contributing to their purpose, drive and agency as activists” (p. 329). Study participants spoke about the role of emotions in keeping them involved rather than learning, which has been discussed by Boud and Walker (1993) and other theorists. Ollis (2008) expressed that activists' emotions and desire for a better world “precipitate a motivation to act and to change it” (p. 329). This corresponded with the participants' early emotional connections related to the 2016 elections, and the emotions that continued to come up throughout the course of their involvement in Indivisible initiatives. Brown and Pickerill (2009) explored the role of emotions in activism and recognized that emotions can have a role in mobilizing activism, in the development of collective identities, and in burnout from activism (pp. 26-28). Burnout was described by 36% of study participants (n=18) as a factor that hindered involvement, and emotional engagement was a factor that sustained involvement. When participants managed to achieve the right levels of

engagement, that helped protect against burnout. Part of that could be achieved by taking breaks from the work, which was reported by 18% of the total study (n=10).

Emotions were identified as heightened during the study period because of the actions of the Trump administration, the proposed policies, and the actions of other affiliated politicians who participants thought would cause negative effects on their communities, states, and nation. Forty-nine percent of the total study participants (n=25) and 95% of the interview participants (n=21) identified the opposition as a reason for staying involved. Brooker (2018) identified Indivisible's challenge of "the instability of its position as antagonist and its prospects for grassroots mobilization" as "endless oppositional battles do little to inspire activists to stay involved" (p. 178). Brooker and Meyer (2018) identified that political threats are important for coalitions to be formed, and "a shared sense of threat stemming from the broader political environment can motivate groups to form coalitions" (p. 258). Coalitions may become less powerful, however, after the political reality changes. Participants did not know how they would be involved after President Biden was elected; however, participants who sustained involvement and identified 'the opposition' as a reason for staying involved articulated other ongoing oppositional forces. At the time the study research was conducted from November 2022 to January 2023, these included "MAGA Republicans," specific Congresspeople or Senators they felt were not representing them, people wanting to ban books or take over school boards, and the continuing impacts of the former president.

Albright (2004) wrote, "Environmental scanning focuses on the identification of emerging issues, situations, and potential pitfalls that may affect an organization's future" (p. 40). In this case, the 'organization' that was being threatened was not Indivisible, a group, but instead the people, groups, and democratic principles that participants cared about in the United

States and local communities. Albright offered different reasons for environmental scanning, but perhaps most importantly, it “reduces the chance of being blindsided and results in greater anticipatory management” (p. 40). Participants who continued to be motivated by the “opposition” as a reason for sustained involvement were participating in that environmental scanning and staying abreast of the latest developments in the news.

Angelique and Culley (2014) identified the psychological factor of moral/civic duty as a motivation for activists staying involved. Beyerlein and Ryan (2018) studied clergy and laity protesters; religious viewpoints or moral reasons may have contributed to participants feeling a duty to be involved or speak up. Fifty-five percent of the study participants stayed involved because of a sense of duty and values (n=30). They had felt compelled to speak up or to take action against the actions of the administration. Kutlaca et al. (2020) wrote that activists often feel “morally obliged to address injustice” and often “feel stronger psychological ties with their group and more so with their activist subgroup” (p. 2). Sixty percent of study participants reported that they stayed involved because of committed group members or relationships (n=33).

Study participants experienced additional personal changes through their involvement with Indivisible. In terms of leadership and personal development, 51% of the study reported experiencing this (n=28). Daloz et al. (1996) wrote, “‘Leadership’ can mean many things, but surely it includes the ability to mobilize others in positive ways” (p. 42). In the context of social action and activism activities, people who are able to motivate others “in positive ways” are needed in movements. Brookfield and Preskill (2009) have explored the leadership presentations that can exist in social action and wrote, “Our chief claim is that leadership can be practiced by anyone in any kind of movement, community, organization, or institution” (p. 3). Operating under this assumption, the researcher was attentive to reported examples of leadership or

development from the study participants. In the demographic surveys, 67% of study participants reported having had a leadership role with Indivisible (n=37).

Greenberg and Levin (2019) and Roth (2018) identified how Indivisible participants gained leadership experience within the context of their work. Gose and Skocpol (2019) noted that Indivisible “volunteer leadership teams experienced inevitable shifts” (p. 18). Vacancies created leadership opportunities for study participants after a group member left or stepped down. Because of the amount of movement in volunteer groups, with different sub-groups or committees, there were many ways participants could assume a leadership role (Greenberg & Levin, 2019). They may not have considered a leadership role within activism. For some, this altered and increased their view of their own capabilities and self, as they stepped out of their comfort zones. Through their involvement and immersive experiences, some participants reported becoming more confident (33% of total study, n=18) and assertive (45% of total study, n=25).

The act of learning can also contribute to “something that matters to the community as a whole” (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009, p. 6). Learning how to navigate these different roles in a new organization contributed to both the organization’s growth, as well as their own personal learning and growth. Participants took advantage of learning opportunities through resources and training (55%, n=30), and opportunities with coalition groups (60%, n=33). This, in turn, added value to the larger movement. Participants were then willing to share their knowledge with other group members to further the group’s interests. This is an example of how leadership development may contribute to the experiences for other potential future leaders, as well as members who are growing their knowledge base within this space.

Participants learned how to contribute and use prior knowledge in a new setting. This was described by 86% of study participants (n=19). The study sample had a variety of professional backgrounds, and 76% of the study had 26 or more years of professional experience (n=42). They realized that their backgrounds added value and strengthened their skills. Depending on the participant, this included using management, communication, writing, technology, organization, research, synthesis, or speaking backgrounds. Participants had multiple opportunities to practice knowledge-in-action (Schön, 1987b). Some participants who added value in these ways felt appreciated and received validation, which was a sub-factor for sustained involvement for 22% of study participants (n=12). Participants also realized how transferable skills could be applied or built upon in the work. Greenberg and Levin (2019), co-founders of Indivisible, reinforce this idea, asking the reader and potential Indivisible member if they have ever been told: “That the skills you’ve learned managing your daughter’s soccer team, or running a PTA committee, or teaching high school, are some of the skills we need to save democracy?” (p. 88). They also assert that the reader can be “not just a petition signer but a leader in training,” and that the reader themselves “can run for office” (p. 88). These ideas were communicated to study participants, and they took them to heart.

Integrative Process-Oriented Evolutionary Framework

The experiences of analyzing the data, reviewing the findings, and reading literature led to the development of an integrative process-oriented evolutionary framework. This framework incorporates the researcher’s understanding of the process of becoming involved as a new activist after what might be thought of as a wide-scale ‘disorienting dilemma’ (Mezirow, 1994).

The integrative process-oriented evolutionary framework should be read left to right, with the understanding that many participants may go back and forth between rectangles. The threads

connecting with boxes may be thought of as a spider web (Schroeber, 2015), or someone working on embroidery on a section of fabric. For many participants, they started with first becoming involved in Indivisible and having the opportunity of meeting like-minded people, with the goal of wanting to save democracy. Concurrently, negative policies were being rolled out, and they started to have increased consciousness post-election, as some participants had not thought that such a reality was possible. As participants started to develop relationships with people with similar concerns and interests, they had the chance to have dialogue with them and receive emotional and practical support from people who were also processing their emotions. These connections led to additional opportunities that they would hear about—the opportunity to join coalitions or action groups, more regular discussion groups as the Indivisible chapters formalized, and people that they could rely on for anything. These connections led to additional learning, people they could count on seeing, and growing relationships with trust. As this was happening, participants continued to have reasons to be angry, continued to see injustice, and continued to develop feelings of duty.

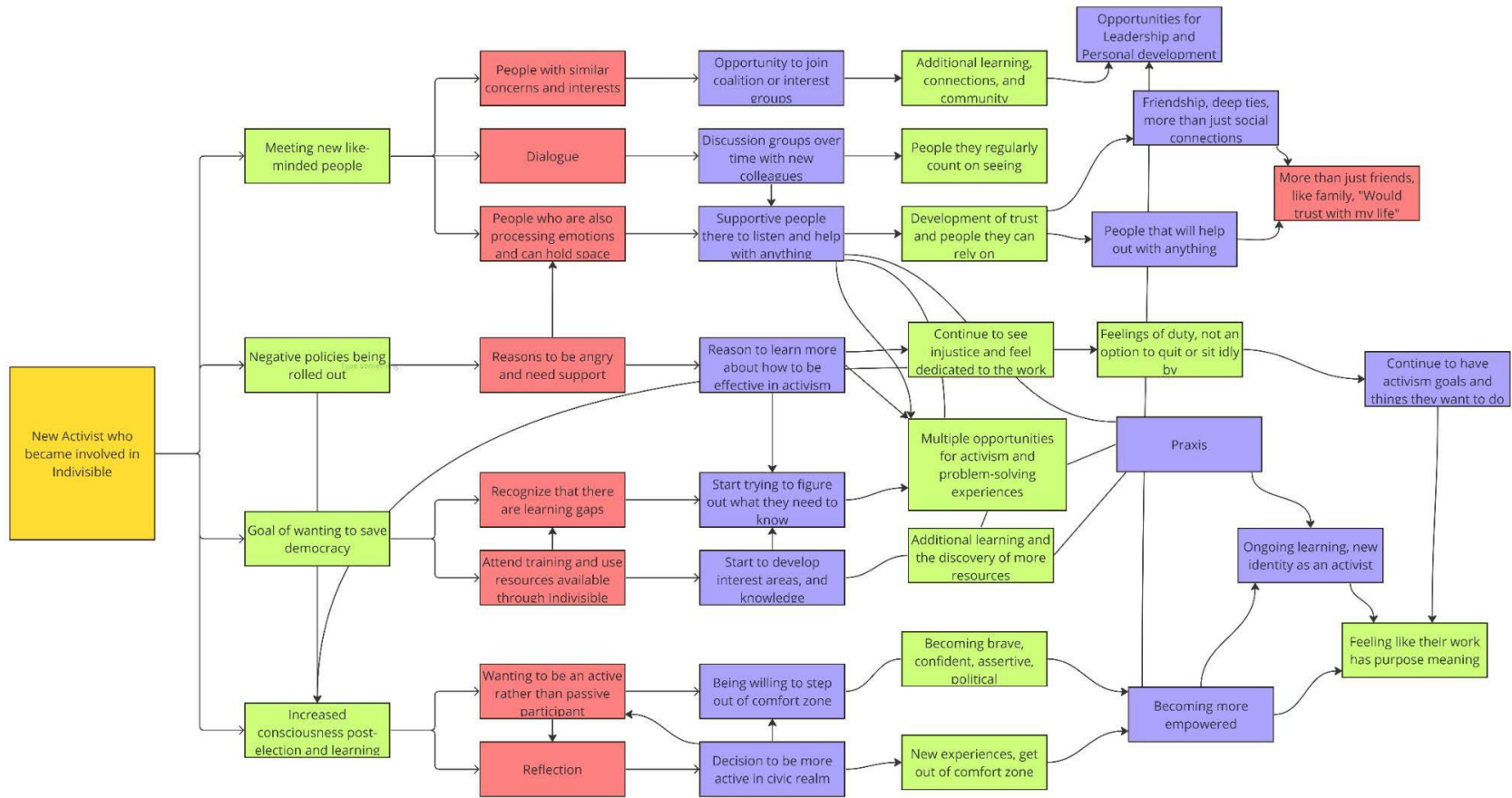
In their goal of wanting to save democracy, they recognized that they had learning gaps and sought out additional training to fill those learning gaps to be more effective in their activism. They continued to understand more about what they needed to know, while also developing personal interests. There were regular opportunities for problem-solving activities and action events, and the participants could apply what they learned to real-life settings—along the way, receiving the support that was referenced by the strong group ties. In the lowest thread, their consciousness had the opportunity to continue to grow, especially as some participants sought to be more active, reflecting upon the current circumstances and what they had already done. Many participants ventured out of their comfort zone and made the decision to be more

active in the civic realm. In doing so, some became more assertive, brave, and critical, and these additional experiences led to additional feelings of empowerment. Some participants continued on and felt as though their work had purpose or meaning, and they continued to have activism goals and things they wanted to do in the future that kept them coming back.

With more threads used to connect between boxes—more dialogue with like-minded people, with additional learning through structured learning, and conversations, reflection, and a growing awareness of the state of the world—the spider web or piece of fabric becomes stronger. The web does not always progress in one direction. Participants may slow down or speed up depending on the season, but the number of activities and the repetition of meetings with dialogue with others strengthen their overall experience. It is harder for the spider web to be removed, to fall apart, or to untangle the thread. The fabric does not go back to how it was—it may be beautiful, but it has still changed. The spider web does not fall down with the first storm.

Some people do not make it all the way to the right; a box at the far upper right describes the experience of fellow participants being more than friends, and instead family. This does not happen for everyone, but for some people who become involved to that level, the experience of becoming deeply involved changed some of the people that were closest to them in their lives.

Figure 3. Integrative Evolutionary Framework



Corrigall-Brown (2021), Fisher (2019), Greenberg and Levin (2019), and Skocpol and Tervo (2020) identified motivations for becoming involved in resistance work, and Fisher (2019) focused on repeated involvement with protest events. In terms of increased consciousness and praxis, Freire (1993) influenced this conceptual framework; Kilgore (1999) also considered identity, consciousness, connectedness, and sense of agency, which inspired the design (p. 96). Costa et al. (2021) also found that consciousness was important, as was the “know-how to speak out” (p. 226), and through the learning in community, the new activists could develop this confidence and knowledge base. Brookfield (1987) influenced its design, as people feeling less alone and stronger in the context of a community also helped to strengthen this web or piece of fabric. The more interactions, learning, and development of social ties may help a participant see how they can fit in—and add value—if they see how there may be a place for them. Without the dialogue, group ties, additional learning, and opportunities for problem-solving experiences, the web or piece of fabric is not strong and is easier to blow over or rip. This emergent framework could be of interest to researchers studying new activists or new activist groups in the future.

Researcher Assumptions, Limitations, and New Insights

In this section, the researcher will revisit their assumptions, discuss study limitations, and consider new insights and contributions to the literature. This started with an assumption regarding sourcing the participants. The first study assumption was there would be enough Indivisible members, new to activism when they joined, who would agree to participate in a study without financial incentives. The study included the researcher, who was not affiliated with Indivisible, reaching out to participants; she thought this lack of affiliation could be a potential barrier. The researcher was able to source enough participants through Facebook, Twitter, and participants sharing the study opportunity in internal Indivisible groups (e.g., a closed board or

email list). These methods were more effective than emailing individual chapters or messaging the email through their website portals. Those emails largely went unanswered. The assumption that enough qualified members of Indivisible from 2017 to 2020 would agree to participate was verified.

The second assumption was that there would be commonalities in reasons for sustained involvement among newer activists. There were in fact several common factors, subfactors, and learning findings that were identified through concept coding of the interviews, CIQs, and focus group. These were more factors than the researcher had anticipated, particularly with the emergent sub-factors that helped with sustained involvement. The researcher also found commonalities in factors that hindered involvement, and community factors that hindered learning and change.

The third assumption was that participant learning and changes occurred through the act of becoming involved in Indivisible groups and social action work. This was confirmed, as discussed in Chapter 5. Participant learning and changes were identified; community factors that facilitated learning were also identified. Three community factors that hindered learning were identified as well.

The fourth and final assumption was that civic engagement and learning would be necessary for the future health of the United States of America. The Arceneaux and Truex (2024) study investigating the “Big Lie” about the results of the 2020 elections showed that “whether Republicans really believe that the election was not stolen from Trump, many will reward Republican candidates who claim that it was” (p. 283). This may have created a situation in which “if one does not win an election, claiming fraud will not only go unpunished by the public but might even help galvanize one’s side” (p. 284). Former President Trump is currently the

Republican frontrunner for President in the 2024 election despite having been charged with 91 felonies (Colvin, 2024). The researcher continues to believe that civic engagement, social action, and learning are important. This assumption remains the same, in consideration of the study findings.

There were a few study limitations. The plan to reach out to participants before the 2022 midterm elections in all 50 states did not unfold as planned. The potential study participants were busy with activism; the email may not have been noticed. Social media proved more effective. The participants in the study were sourced throughout the country, primarily by Indivisible participants active in Facebook groups or on Twitter. Potential participants who did not engage with Facebook or Twitter, and did not receive their chapter's emails, likely would not have learned about the study opportunity. The researcher has included demographic information and participant profiles so the reader may understand more about the study population. They may then assess the findings in light of the participant study population. There were enough similarities in their experiences, reasons for staying involved, learnings, and changes, that the researcher thinks it offers valuable insights. The researcher wants to convey that this is a snapshot of what worked—and did not work—for 55 new activist participants who were able to stay involved for 2 or more years. In terms of generalizability, the researcher would assert that certain aspects of the findings and analysis are likely relevant more broadly, such as how some Indivisible groups were able to serve as holding environments for new activists or coalition groups and resources were important to participant learning. The findings are likely not as relevant to the experience of becoming involved in a more established organization, or a group primarily composed of participants in their early twenties. Life stage is relevant when thinking about social action involvement.

In retrospect, the researcher would have added an additional question in the demographic survey about political identity. It would have been helpful to know if participants changed how they identified on a political spectrum currently, as well as before their participation in Indivisible. This would have been useful in understanding any study-wide changes in political identity. Options could include, in no particular order: independent, moderate, liberal leaning, left, progressive, conservative leaning, right, fill in the blank identifier, or not applicable. This would be subjective, based on their point of view as to what constituted a particular political identification.

This study contributed to a broader understanding of what new adult activists may learn or how they might change in new social action organizations, as well as how community elements may facilitate their learning. The most significant learning and changes findings were participants learning to be effective citizens to get things done in the public sphere; learning about activism and how to organize; having increased consciousness; learning how to create community and work together; and experiencing leadership and personal development. It contributed to greater understanding of the factors and sustaining sub-factors that may keep new activists involved. Indivisible's flexible format and supportive friends and family members were important emergent sub-factors. The learning facilitators of opportunities with coalition groups and participants feeling there was a place for everyone were unexpected.

The study also offers an example of what self-efficacy development can look like for new participants in social action work, especially as participants had successes, the opportunity for social modeling, and social persuasion over time through their work (Bandura, 2011, p. 9). The commitment and efforts over time provided additional opportunities for growth, satisfaction, and sense of self. The study also contributed to the understanding regarding how Indivisible groups

from 2017 to 2020 served as holding environments and communities of practice for some longer-term participants. Participants reported accounts of engaging in shared and collective leadership. The study contributes to the understanding that new participants in Indivisible successfully learned to work together on common initiatives, and that new activist participants had the opportunity to take on leadership roles and tasks. Study participants also offered accounts of how participation in Indivisible led to learning and personal changes. The role of feelings of belonging and acceptance, and external learning opportunities may be relevant for future studies. The study reinforced what was known about burnout in decreasing involvement or potential learning. In addition, the study provided a snapshot of new activists' thoughts and reflections about their own involvement post-2016 Election. This might be of interest to those looking to understand more how longer-term activists viewed their own involvement, and what they thought was most relevant to their learning or change. The study also contributed to the understanding of social action learning experiences for new activists who joined groups when they were in their sixties, with 53% of study participants (n=29) reporting that they were 65 or older at the time of the study. This will be discussed further in the Recommendations section.

Conclusion

Indivisible provided a call to action with guidance, support, recommendations, training, possible actions that participants could engage in, and—through all this—hope for the future. Brookfield and Preskill (2009) asserted that “leadership can be practiced by anyone in any kind of movement, community, organization, or institution” (p. 3). The combination of a supportive environment and regular opportunities for learning and knowledge in action helped support new social action participants. They gained activism skills, grew with personal development, and increased in confidence. This personal growth occurred with the support of their new

communities, while they were a part of widespread social change. The opportunity to join Indivisible as a new activist in 2017-2020 gave the participants a way to plug in and make a difference without specific prior knowledge. All participants came into the work with valuable life experience and backgrounds; these helped inform the vision for each Indivisible group. Their personal imprints helped to affect the learning and social action environment for the other members of their community. These groups and sub-groups gave individuals access, a chance for their voices to be heard, to work together, and to make a difference. With the upcoming 2024 Presidential Election, there will be work for potential new activists. Alone, issues can seem intimidating. Working together, there are more opportunities for action and change. Additional participants have the chance to contribute, learn, build community, have an impact on their local areas, and realize they may be capable of things they had never anticipated in the past.

Recommendations

This section includes recommendations for new activists, organizations engaged in social action, educators seeking to cultivate social action, and future research. These recommendations were inspired by the study findings and grounded by the literature referenced in this study. Recommendations were developed from November 2023 to March 2024. The researcher hopes some recommendations continue to be relevant outside of the current timeframe.

Recommendations for New Activists

New activists might first consider their reasons ‘why.’ Why are they interested in becoming involved in activism or civic engagement work? Reflecting upon their belief system, their needs and values about why social change is important to them, and why they would like to support it now may help with their sustained involvement. Fifty-five percent of the study participants (n=30) attributed their strong belief system and conviction around the work—

believing it was not an option to quit—as a reason for why they were able to sustain involvement. Understanding why they care about the work, feeling the value of purpose, and getting to know the people and communities who may critically rely on the work all may help fortify involvement. It also may contribute to their feeling like they had a purpose or meaning, which was referenced by 36% of study participants (n=20). New activists may notice that their reasons for being involved change over time. This is to be expected, as they have increased consciousness about the state of the political landscape and societal conditions. Learning, reading, and staying current may help reinforce an activist’s reason why. They may consider reading books by people currently involved in social action work, or about past social action struggles to situate the work they choose for their actions.

New activists may have a friend who invites them. They may know of an outstanding leader. It’s not just work and how to accomplish it with the goals and objectives; it’s also the people. The first group a new activist visits may not become their ultimate home base. If the first group is not a match, they might consider visiting other groups or seeing how the group describes themselves online. Study participants sometimes became involved through other activism-related events like the Women’s March or with adjacent organizations before landing with Indivisible. New activists may wish to set up an ‘activist’ email address and check for opportunities when they have the bandwidth. They can subscribe to different local groups and see if there is anything that resonates with them. They also may wish to look into a group’s structure. There could be advantages to plugging into an established group. Finding alignment between their interests and the kinds of involvement they are open to is something to consider. Does the group have a focus on learning or any training? Could they dip their toe in? As people may visit multiple churches before joining one, some study participants started out at a different

coalition group before finding their home at Indivisible. Other study participants started with Indivisible and found that they also really liked being involved with a coalition group or civic engagement organization. They referenced members who ran for office or became involved in another group as well. If a potential new activist is not sure why they want to be involved but are curious, stepping forward could be the first step toward combatting disillusionment or even despair. Participating in this work can lead to additional hope and motivation.

Potential new activists should not be afraid to try on different hats or try out different activities in their activism journey. If it doesn't feel comfortable at the beginning, they could become more comfortable with time. They also could try a different setting and see if that connects. Some participants followed just the subject area; other participants started working with a group member they 'clicked' with, and that helped them come back. They might find other groups that are a better fit for them, their personality, interests, and commitment preferences when they explore different settings. New activists who think family or friends might be supportive of their activism efforts may want to share their involvement with those people in their inner circle. Forty percent of study participants (n=22), and 86% of interview participants, reported having supportive family members and friends. New activists may be encouraged to know they could meet like-minded people, reported by 58% of study participants (n=32), and receive different kinds of support from group members.

If new activists are questioning whether their background is relevant to the needs of a social action group, they should know their prior experience is often highly transferable to the needs of a movement. They should understand that everyone has potential valuable contributions to a group like Indivisible. Participants across the study did not realize all of the ways they would be able to add value when they joined, yet 86% of participants learned how to contribute and use

prior knowledge in a new setting (n=19). Reflecting about one's current skills may help a new activist identify ways they could help out and contribute. Part of this is understanding a group's current needs. Some ways that potential participants could add value include: graphic design, social media knowledge, organizational skills, people skills, dependability, neat handwriting, fast and accurate typing skills, research abilities in different areas, providing transportation, data analysis and programming skills, helping reach out to others in the community, pragmatic problem-solving, creativity, analytical skills at all levels, subject-matter knowledge about specific topics, attention to detail, diplomacy, collegiality, determination, and more. Most of all, groups need people who will show up. A new activist may start working with a team or learn a new skill to strengthen the group's impact. They should not feel shy about taking advantage of any workshops, training, or resources that are provided by a group like Indivisible. Even if a potential new activist feels that they have less experience than they would like, there will be tremendous learning and growth opportunities by joining a group like Indivisible. This may change their ideas of how they might like to spend their time going forward. Fifty-five percent of study participants (n=30) had their learning supported through resources or training. They should also feel open to staying abreast with what is happening with coalition groups, as 60% of study participants (n=33) had their learning supported through opportunities with coalition groups.

If and when new activists feel comfortable with their new social action group, they may wish to share other aspects of their lives. Camaraderie may help develop mutual support. Volunteer social action work may provide a community with like-minded and engaged people on multiple levels; the larger group; smaller subgroups; leaders and mentors; colleagues with whom one works; affiliated social action groups; representatives at local, state, and federal levels; and stakeholder groups. It may afford learning opportunities and personal development: the

opportunity to learn more about a new area. Dialogue with group members can lead to learning; it is often worth the effort to get to know people. Potential activists can take on and try out a new role, gain experiences and new skills, see the difference one can make within an organization, see the value and impact of one's and the group's contributions, feel satisfaction with efforts to better things, think beyond oneself, learn more about being a citizen, learn how the government works, and become informed. They can learn how to stand up to misinformation. They can learn how to operate in a different setting, with the norms and expectations that are co-created in their group. The new activist should attempt to find a place where they can bring themselves—their full selves—as a starting point. If the potential activist thinks that this could be a safe place, a good holding learning environment, the match might be the most fruitful. Potential activists should feel open to sharing things that they read, things they have questions about, and things they want to learn: these could be ways to strengthen group ties. Developing relationships or friendships may be a positive side benefit. It also may help with their learning: with 64% of study participants learning through community relationships and friendships (n=35); and sustained involvement, and with 60% of study participants staying involved because of committed community members and relationships (n=33).

New activists may choose to work toward the issue that most resonates with them. This will likely lead to more emotional engagement versus working on a project that is not as interesting or compelling to them. Emotional engagement was a sustaining factor for 45% of study participants (n=25). Finding balance is important. Study participants referenced taking breaks as being valuable to staying involved, and making sure to schedule things that were important to them in their lives (e.g., taking time for a sport or a fun recreational activity). New activists should also trust that they are a part of something much greater. Participants should be

encouraged to take on what feels like the right amount of involvement for them. By contributing, and working on their preferred interest areas, they could trust that other activists were working on additional important issues. If they want to work across different areas, that is great, but they should understand that they cannot do everything. Participants who feel they are part of a greater movement may feel less pressured, which could decrease burnout. From participant accounts, some of their past colleagues who had left may have taken on too much. Having the mindset of “it takes a village,” and not feeling they need to take everything on may help create healthy boundaries with activism activities.

New activists should make space to reflect and make goals for the future. Having elections to work toward and other future plans to have hope in can help sustain involvement. Also it is worthwhile to pause and celebrate accomplishments, and to reflect on how they want to be involved with next. They might pause to check in with themselves periodically to make sure they are still involved with the things they love and are important in their lives. If they feel like they have taken on too much, they should be encouraged to be transparent with group members to support planning and understanding. Participation may ebb and flow; new activists should know this is normal; there will be more projects when they are ready.

Recommendations for Organizations Engaged in Social Action

Organizations engaged in social action work should know that community relationships and friendships help to sustain involvement and facilitate learning. Social action organizations operate in a changing landscape and need to retain and support current members, and also welcome and train new members. That is a lot of juggling. There is work to do, with a volunteer workforce and often limited resources: they need to creatively accomplish more with less. Building community takes time and effort. Figuring out ways to facilitate connections between

group members is worth the necessary time and effort. The study participants felt they could learn and trust other members, especially through their shared experiences and group history. Fostering relationships and friendships may be done in a variety of ways. This includes having in-person events to allow for informal interactions. Having smaller groups focused on specific action areas or functional teams was also reported as being helpful for participants to get to know each other better. The relationships developed over time; this is not necessarily something that would benefit from being sped up. Having regular opportunities for interaction was something several participants reported as contributing to relationship development. Group discussion and dialogue supported learning, with 95% of interview participants reporting they had learned through dialogue or group discussion (n=21). When groups make time for regular in-person talks, encourage participants to get to know each other, have a discussion buddy, those can be useful to promote additional learning and sustained involvement. The researcher was impressed by how much the participants had learned from other people they admired or now considered close friends. It turned out group members worked to improve conditions with their social action work, and also learned tremendous amounts as they got to know them better. There are many talented people with any group; learning from both their prior experience and knowledge, as well as their current interests, could also increase a group member's knowledge base and areas of interests.

To strengthen community relationships, this could start with the group itself. Group leaders could ask group members for their insights and suggestions. This could be done in both direct as well as anonymous formats, such as the CIQ. By keeping dialogue open for ideas, suggestions, and feedback, group cohesiveness may expand as members understand what is working, and what is important to their colleagues. Recognizing that group members are

engaged, creative people, familiar with their community, could be a start to generating fresh, innovative ideas. Another approach may be trying some exercises in *The Discussion Book: 50 Great Ways to Get People Talking* (Brookfield & Preskill, 2016). Creating community can be done through small steps and big actions. One lighter suggestion could be to include a different person offering an introduction at the start of each meeting, having an icebreaker or round robin activity to mention something notable in their week, or other conversation starters (Brookfield & Preskill, 2016). Some study participants recommended sponsoring more in-person activities, funding food or other gatherings, so participants could get to know each other. It could be figuring out ways to encourage future participation with new members by connecting them with current members and trying to build those interpersonal connections. The informal exchanges that occur within a group setting can be important for group members to get to know each other. Energy spent trying to foster belonging, and letting participants know that there is a place for them in the group, is time well spent. Part of this is trying to foster a positive holding environment in which growth can occur, and encouraging learning opportunities that support the work and members' developing interests.

Group members who enjoy and admire each other are more likely to return and to stay involved. When they have shared convictions and belief in the work and objectives, they have common ground for future growth. Finding ways and spaces for current members to interact with and learn from each other, from the leaders, and from the new members, all this would vary from group to group. It may be 'getting to know each other' gatherings, shared group trainings, cross-training areas of expertise, mentoring, identifying how others may be engaged and welcomed, creating tangible value together in a current project or initiative, initiating a new one, celebrating successes. Community connections are essential for involvement. In relation to making a

difference and thinking more was possible, the first part of this sustained involvement factor entails getting people involved in the work and then feeling connected to the work. The second part is identifying and articulating successes whenever there are successes. Ideally, a participant starts to feel connected to the group's or the movement's successes, recognizes things that have gone right, and then starts to see the possibility for future successes. To encourage and support the belief in future possibilities, it helps to have opportunities for discussion and dialogue, opportunities for celebrations—big and little, and holding strategy meetings for both realistic goals and reachable goals for a group.

People have different preferences, interests, and availability. Some need a free rein; others need structure. If the group has the resources, it may be effective to assess what will best position the activist to both feel engaged and be effective. This could be employed with experienced activists asking how things are going. Learning from other activists may deepen a new activist's understanding of the ways they may participate. Ideally the group stays flexible enough to offer a platform in which anyone can rise up and be a leader if that is their preferred path. Encouraging learning and leadership development for members may help activists realize their capabilities, feel more empowered, and be willing to take on greater roles. Another area that may be of interest would be an experienced group that had gained experience developing suggestions for new groups or new activists. Some participants indicated that they thought younger people would love the work and format, but maybe would want to develop their own groups. Learning about what worked for other groups with people serving as a friendly voice or advisor that they could call on may help other potential participants make it work for their context. There was a lot of knowledge within the study, and if members were willing to serve as mentors to impart this knowledge in an official capacity, that could be beneficial.

Participants should be offered regular ways they can participate, with different amounts of time commitment. Having a sense of duty or conviction around the work includes educating participants of needs and objectives, sharing group and individual goals, relating the work they have done, explaining how they can make a difference and how they have made a difference, and acknowledging successful outcomes realized with their involvement. This may bolster involvement by helping participants gain a sense of duty and understand why the work matters, or may be in line with their values. Not all of this would be done at once, but reflecting upon their reasons “why” could be a helpful exercise from time to time. The experience of doing the work and seeing the impacts firsthand may be significant for involvement, even if the outcome is not their preferred one. Hearing the conviction from other participants about their reasons “why” they keep showing up may cause some to stay involved. Increased consciousness was also a factor for sustained involvement; this was discussed in conjunction with the projects, activities, and emails that came up in the capacity of being involved in an Indivisible group. Having training, both internal and external, may also support increased consciousness.

Leadership and personal development could be encouraged by Indivisible leaders by making use of training, both formal and informal, and considering ways to break down into smaller components the different kinds of work or leadership responsibilities. Easing into something new, gaining confidence, and having success can encourage leadership and personal development. Leadership may be developed by sharing power as group leaders and recruiting individuals to take the lead on activities they enjoy (e.g. a newsletter, or being the website contact if they like corresponding with prospective or current members). Groups that assess their own group dynamics and their members and needs, understand other group models for leadership and personal development, and consider what has worked well and why may better evaluate

ways to structure or restructure their groups. This could be when members leave, when new members become involved, and upon recognition that an update could be beneficial.

Participants joined Indivisible because they were motivated by oppositional forces. Coalitions may become less powerful, however, after the political reality changes. Because this study found that a number of participants continued to be involved and motivated by opposition forces, social action organizations may have an opportunity to source new members when the threat of opposition forces is stronger. Having new member outreach and seeking to re-engage both former group members and less involved members might be important before an election. Groups may also want to consider outreach with participants who might have interest and availability for community involvement. Members who need to step out for life reasons should be welcomed back if they have the capacity and interest in the future. The sustaining involvement sub-factor of “Hope, and elections which create hope” may be tapped into, as well as potential participants might be motivated to act due to what they perceive to be a threat. Midterm and Presidential elections may be key times to participate and feel the participation is meaningful to be able to challenge the opposition.

Indivisible’s flexible format helped participants make the group work for their interests and contexts. Groups and individuals could decide how to spend their energy, how much direction and guidance they were receptive to receiving, and how they could concentrate their efforts on the kinds of activism and learning they preferred. This is something participants reported that Indivisible did quite well. When it really worked for a group and its members, participants found it to be empowering. Because Indivisible’s flexible format was a compelling sub-factor for many study participants, having examples of how past participants have been able to adapt groups for their local contexts, community, and preferences could be a compelling

website sub-web page for this and other groups to encourage other people to join groups. Group websites and other social media, when updated with current stories, may have more impact. Keeping websites and social media up to date is important: that signals the organization manages the details to be present and plan for the future. Though there are groups around the country, it may or may not be desirable to join an established group with its own set leadership structure and goals and initiatives. Sometimes participants may want the opportunity to create a new group in their local area. Learning about the variety of ways Indivisible groups have flourished in different spaces could prove inspirational for other future potential activists. Other new social action groups may be interested in offering a flexible approach to potential members, while also trying to strengthen intergroup ties, with the goal of people joining and staying involved.

Even with flexibility, however, some participants may discover that a group may not be the best fit for them. Groups can make efforts to create a sense of belonging by including new members in meaningful ways, but there may be times that a participant may feel like it is not the right match for their interests. One way groups could support this transition is by keeping the door open and letting participants know of other groups that may be more aligned with their current interests or structure preferences. For instance, one study participant really preferred the online and electronic format. Instead of trying to force an activist to stick it out and adapt to how a group is meeting, group leaders may help with introductions to other coalition groups or recommend other leads that may be of interest. Group leaders should not see this as a rejection of the group. There are many ways to be involved, and by having this be a positive shift in which people who care about this work can still be in contact and not embarrassed about the move, it may strengthen the overall work of the movement. Helping people in transition is still a way of adding value, and there were several participants in this study that tried out other groups first.

They still admired them, but found their place with Indivisible. Others referenced people that had more niche groups they were now dedicating energy to, but they would still dip into Indivisible meetings or utilize information in the regular emails.

Opportunities with coalition groups facilitated learning and development, and 86% of interview participants referenced coalition groups as facilitating their learning (n=19). This happened through joint events or partnerships between Indivisible and the other group, the participant joining other groups—either attending in person or following their mailing list, or hearing about open training the groups aligned with their Indivisible-specific goals. Participants benefited from hearing other points of view, from hearing climate-specific knowledge, from learning how other groups recommended canvassing, or by seeing how other groups put on events. This could be communicated in an email list or newsletter, a regular group meeting, or by a participant creating a social action-affiliated email address and signing up for newsletters from different coalition groups. In some cases, participants found a group they particularly liked, though they remained involved with Indivisible. Participants had learning enriched through external opportunities and groups. This additional engagement and learning should be supported or encouraged. Group leaders may wish to continue to build relationships with the leaders of other groups; that proved to be fruitful for several study participant leaders.

Resources, Training, and Workshops that supported learning were mentioned by 75% of interview participants (n=16) through their interview or CIQ. Some of the training was specific to activities within activism; there may be the opportunity to offer participatory learning and action training workshops. Additional participatory learning workshops, with the opportunity to reflect and effect change, may help them build “more confidence in their competencies” (Ibnouf et al., 2015, p. 144). With limited resources and time, it makes sense that this would not be a

focus for new activists. It seems possible that some participants not yet in a leadership role may benefit from workshops or participatory learning opportunities as learning scaffolding for them to then be willing to step into a position with additional responsibility.

Having supportive family and friends helps members stay involved. One possible way groups may encourage supportive family and friends could be to invite them to a special recognition and thank you event for their support. Another option may be to welcome them to social action activities once a quarter or annually—whatever fits for the group. Meeting other participants in person and becoming informed may help them better understand what the group is and does, learn more about current efforts, and even have the opportunity to attend an engaging meeting or training. The emphasis would be on appreciation and positive connections.

Participants who receive support may subsequently benefit from even more and informed support. In terms of recruiting, social activities such as a potluck or dessert social might be a way of inviting potential new members. The benefit of engaging supportive family and friends so they continue to support the participants would be worthwhile on its own. They may even know others looking to engage and participate, have innovative ideas, be acquainted with helpful people, know of beneficial resources, or relate positive news about the organization. There were several study participants who involved their family members in Indivisible's efforts. There may be additional opportunities to encourage participation without people feeling pressured or overwhelmed.

Participants may stay involved when there continue to be things they want to accomplish, and when they have something to hope for or work toward. The more significant the work, the more hopeful the prospects for effecting change, the better the chances are for ongoing involvement. For additional engagement, participants could write down or share how they would

like to be involved, anything they are looking forward to or want to be a part of, along with their activism goals for the next year. This could lead to reflection and interest in other participants who might want to adapt similar goals for their own interests as well. This could also be an opportunity to use an anonymous Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) so that group members could share their hopes or things they want to accomplish in a more anonymous way. This might work in larger groups to facilitate personal reflection rather than group dialogue. Finally, gratitude and appreciation for members and their contributions matter. Groups do this—but being cognizant of the time and energy of group members can make the difference. This matters coming from fellow members, local leaders, national leaders, and politicians.

Recommendations for Educators Seeking to Cultivate Social Action

Educators may be interested in social action initiatives, or supporting adults who are considering becoming involved in activism for the first time. The polarization in the media with participants having to align with specific camps and everything that group stands for is not always representative of the groups in practice. No oath must be signed, and from member accounts, there is room for additional voices and perspectives. Showing up and trying something can be a powerful antidote to despair, if nothing else but to remind participants that they are not alone if they disagree with events in the political landscape. Doing something rather than nothing is a step in the right direction, and may have unanticipated positive side effects. Groups such as Indivisible, with members who speak highly about their experiences, may be of benefit or interest for a variety of reasons. One reason that could be articulated for potential members is community. It can be more difficult to make new friends or develop communities when friends move away or when they have life changes that result in a change of connections. Joining a group and participating in activities may positively contribute to their social lives, provide

support, expand those they may talk to and learn from, and add purpose and learning to their lives. They also experience the benefits of effecting change they believe in as they work together.

If progressive-minded adult educators encounter individuals seeking community, who care to learn about activism or social engagement and are new to the space, recommending they consider a local group similar to Indivisible might be an entry point for their contacts to have growth experiences and learn as they make a difference. Indivisible and similar groups would also benefit from additional members, and by encouraging additional people to join, these groups can remain active for years to come. These groups can also serve the purpose of providing civic education, offering training, helping some participants become more empowered and informed. They could then evaluate if they are drawn to a longer-term commitment.

Based on the participants' experiences, a group like Indivisible might be a first step for *future* activism or learning, as participants may learn of other organizations that focus on their primary areas of interest. The flexible holistic approach of Indivisible may encourage civic engagement and social action for people not enrolled in formal education who are interested in informal learning opportunities. Training around civic engagement and how to get things done in a political system, for example, how to get on a ballot and run for school board, were learned in action by doing in the Indivisible groups. Participants have the opportunity to gain civic knowledge and confidence around activism activities. Gaining comfort and awareness in this arena could be substantive reasons to join a group such as Indivisible.

Outside of Indivisible, social action organizations may offer formal and informal training, for members and possibly non-members. Attending public meetings of different levels of government and agencies can be instructive to see how things work in practice. Becoming

affiliated with a political party and volunteering for a candidate may afford learning opportunities. Being and staying attentive to a range of news sites and outlets and making a point to consider different points of view can further critical thinking and awareness. Current event knowledge can help to anticipate future trends. Students of history may be better positioned to consider current events in the context of history for the United States, as well as history around the world. Civic engagement training could be offered in institutions of higher education, at community centers, at school-based sites for parents to attend, at libraries, from a variety of online resources and participatory online platforms and apps, like Zoom or Teams. Having more awareness of the democratic process, and the rules and procedures, may develop additional involvement and learning for community members who wish to have their voices heard and considered.

Ongoing learning might create increased consciousness. Understanding positionality, conditions for affected groups, and how current political challenges fit into past struggles may help a participant's learning, development, and sustained involvement. Educators can help reinforce that new potential activists have valid and important things to contribute. They can share that everyone has something to contribute. Past studies, life experience, past professional experience, or even a curiosity to learn more can be assets. Anything they have studied or learned about in the past, or prior professional experience, could bring in a new perspective to the work. People across the study did not realize all of the ways they would be able to add value when they joined. Reflecting about any skills they have may help them identify ways they could help out. This could include graphic design, social media, organization skills, people skills, dependability or willingness to show up, neat handwriting, fast typing skills, research ability, or subject-matter knowledge. Groups need people who will show up. Potential members can also be

reminded that incremental change is still change and can serve as inspiration for others to do something. They are part of something greater, and they should not feel like they need to take on everything by themselves. Even if the work is not core to the political process, there are many ways to contribute to positive and healthy communities, such as through mutual aid or volunteering at a library, food bank, or clothing closet. People involved in such work can trust that other people will step up in ways that benefit others and ripple through their town.

Educators could invite a politician to speak to students about how a bill becomes a law, or someone with media relationships could teach people how to write a press release or letter to the editor. This is one kind of activity that happened within the context of Indivisible or coalition groups. Another activity is having a panel of participants in Indivisible or other similar groups to talk about their experiences and learning. Completely separate from any sort of structured group, educators who feel up to the challenge of putting on civic education classes for adult learners at community centers or libraries may be making a difference in the lives of the people they teach. They themselves could run for office, or be inspired to take a more active role in stating their needs to their elected representatives.

Educators could also use the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) in the classroom to hear directly from students about their interests to support and address them, or make additional recommendations. Students could then share information that they might not feel comfortable sharing directly, and the educator could also work to address their concerns.

Recommendations for Future Research

In order to deepen understanding about learning and sustained involvement for new activists, future researchers may be interested in exploring some of the thematic categories in-depth with other social action participants. These could include both those new to the work

and experienced activists. Because the sub-factors for sustained involvement and community learning facilitators were largely emergent, not everyone was specifically asked about some of the themes that emerged from the CIQs, interviews, and the focus group. To understand just how impactful some of these community learning facilitators are, a widespread survey could show if these findings translate to other potential participants who did not encounter the invitation for this study in Fall 2022. The researcher thinks that additional demographic questions around marital status, the segmenting of age ranges into smaller groupings, questions around work status (e.g., full-time, part-time, etc.), and salary would be of interest. Open-ended questions such as recommendations participants have for the long-term health of their groups would be relevant. Understanding the time period in which participants grew up, were active in professional careers, and any world or local events that were impactful may be helpful in contextualizing the findings.

Because the participants were almost entirely still active with Indivisible, with only two uninvolved at the time of the study, understanding the factors that hindered involvement was understood mostly secondhand. Current members shared what hindered them and their experiences and related what they knew about former members; that last part was not direct reporting. The researcher had been interested in understanding what really worked for the participants who stayed committed, but understanding more about what did not work for the participants who had left would have provided a fuller picture about how and why previously involved group members left. The researcher also would recommend speaking to long-time activists—not new to activism—who became involved in a newer organization like Indivisible to better understand their perspective, and their points of view about how best to acclimate new activists into the fold. Such a study might consider Lave and Wenger (1991) and how a new participant might move from “legitimate peripheral participation” to “full participation”

(pp. 36-37). This study did not address this process, but longer interviews with both new and longer-term participants may shed insight into the experience of involvement becoming more complex over time. Studying persistence and belonging for group members of different ages and backgrounds may have practical implications as well. Elements that might be compelling to some group members might lead to others feeling distanced, and understanding more about why newer participants stay and feel a sense of belonging in activism work would be compelling.

Another area that might be illuminating would be speaking to a group that was active during an important window, e.g., 2016-2020, and interviewing participants who stayed over time, as well as those who left. Understanding more about group dynamics and how participants made decisions around certain current events could be of interest. It also could be of interest to know if there were learning interventions participants would recommend in retrospect.

Some participants expressed guilt that they had not been involved in the past. One idea for a study is exploring what movements they wished they had been a part of to understand if there are any connections in understanding how they are choosing to be involved now. Sometimes it was not guilt, but rather situating their work into a larger tradition of social action work and the kind of person they wanted to be. Understanding more how participants may link their current and future plans for activism to events that have occurred in the past may help to shed more light on how the work is tied to a person's frames of reference.

In thinking about both individual development and social action work, Honneth's (1995) theory of recognition could be used to ground a study focused on understanding more about positive acknowledgement and continued involvement. One finding was that some participants felt appreciation and received validation, and some participants gained confidence. Participants felt accepted, and some were able to start to see themselves differently. Understanding more

about how participants in social action efforts may receive positive acknowledgement or recognition from having taken on different kinds of roles may be of interest to group leaders or education researchers.

Several study participants reported that they would like to have additional younger people involved in this work. There are many social action organizations out there, which leads to different options. But studying how a group like Indivisible could try different outreach efforts to engage additional members could be of interest. This study had a fairly homogenous population, and understanding what Indivisible groups look like and how they function with more diverse populations may provide additional insight and broader recommendations.

Inspired by Ollis (2012) and Daloz et al. (1996), a study could take a life history approach to dive deeper with new activists, along with longer-term activists. Understanding more about how seeds for social action and civic engagement participation could be planted earlier in life would be of value. With curricula and library holdings being restricted, things that could happen outside the classroom in communities, families, and community spaces may be of interest. An action learning project focused on engaging both children and their parents with educational content would have relevance for adult learning as well as social action.

While transformative learning was not a focus of this study, the researcher does think that transformative learning was relevant to the experience of several participants. It was not everyone, but a transformative learning approach inspired by Mezirow (1994) may be of interest for future studies with new activists. This could be relevant for future study with those who became involved post-2016, or after another event that led to widespread new involvement. Future research may also want to focus more specifically on shifts in identity that may occur through social action, to develop further understanding about identity and new activists.

The researcher suggests considering the question referenced in this chapter: How do you get more people involved in social action efforts if they might have benefitted from current and past societal structures?

Social justice groups that emerged post-2016 election within houses of worship, and their longevity, could be an area for future study. The strand of participants staying involved because of a sense of duty or values, and the community elements could make this a match for a comparative analysis of learning across faith and secular groups.

Another area that may be of interest is understanding more about the impact of civics education that is open to the public and geared toward learning and engagement. A review of the current offerings and models for the delivery of such training, as well as a historical look back at what civics education has looked like in the United States, could suggest avenues for future program creation. Successful past programs could also be updated for the current time and developed to work in in-person, hybrid, and remote formats. There are trainings that are housed within nonpartisan groups, and understanding more about people's experiences with taking part in such training, and how they participate with civic engagement in the future going forward, could be valuable. Study participants enjoyed learning how to have a more active voice.

Learning opportunities designed to foster civic engagement, without a large time commitment, that are open to the general public of all ages may be an area for future study.

In general, additional studies with new activists over the age of 60 may be of interest. The experience was meaningful for many participants, and understanding more about new activists who are retired may provide understanding about how learning can be fostered in adulthood for them, while also contributing to positive social change. Social action and civic engagement

involvement and life stage may be an area for future research, with the goal of encouraging and supporting participants along the way.

Researcher Reflections

The researcher felt grateful to the study participants and learned so much from the process. The researcher would recommend that someone with more direct connections to an organization, which could lead to sourcing a more representative network of groups, study the experiences of their group members in the future. Having personal connections could build additional trust with group members. The researcher was fortunate to have the study distributed by in-group members; this easily could have been a challenge. This challenge could also be addressed by starting to develop relationships with local group members, and to let them know that a relevant study was being developed.

The researcher considered approaching this study from a transformative learning lens; she was motivated by Mezirow's (1991) work and thought that the 2016 election results led to a "disorienting dilemma" for some. A future trigger event that echoed some of the 'shocking' features of the 2016 election results would be appropriate for a transformative learning study. The researcher assessed that while some participants likely went through the transformative learning phases, many others immediately jumped into or were thrust into certain types of involvement. Many processed their emotions with others, but the researcher wanted to capture the other kinds of learning and changes that occurred without limiting the study in this regard. The one-hour interview format would not have been long enough to probe for the transformative learning steps along with the other focuses of the research, at least for this novice researcher.

In reviewing the findings, the researcher came to the conclusion that the texts were so rich that approaching the study considering just one theory, model, or theorist would have been

very interesting, and might have been compelling. One example would be social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2011). The researcher was updating the manuscript, and reread this quote:

Personal investment in a desired future helps people to organize their lives, motivates them, enables them to put up with hassles along the way and gives them meaning purpose and a sense of accomplishment... Working toward what one values not only brings a sense of satisfaction but changes what one becomes in the process. Subgoal attainments build belief in one's efficacy and beget satisfaction. These positive experiences create intrinsic interest in activities.... Ongoing engagement in things one cares about provides the basis for a satisfying and meaningful life. For life to be enduringly satisfying requires self-renewal for the transitional changes across the life course. When their worklife no longer commands their attention, people have to find new pursuits that give them a sense of purpose and satisfaction. (p. 11)

This excerpt relates to the essence of the study's findings for a subset of participants, especially regarding changing oneself in the process, and finding new pursuits that offer a sense of purpose. It has become apparent that there are so many meaningful ways to approach the topic.

While the researcher believes that the CIQ, interview, and focus group methods were strong for triangulation, she would have extended the interviews to 60-80 minutes, rather than 60 minutes. There were certainly participants for whom 60 minutes was appropriate for their comfort level. There were other participants with so many stories and thoughts about their participation that the longer time period would have been beneficial.

The researcher would like to have included an explicit question about sustained and/or hindered involvement within the CIQ. It would have taken additional reflection and effort by the study participants. That would have helped better inform the findings. The study's Research Question (RQ2)'s sub-question of "What has facilitated or impeded [participants'] learning and development?" also mirrored RQ3's question asking the role of the community in participants' learning or changes. If the third research question were adjusted slightly, this could have led to additional understanding about the participants' experiences.

The researcher also would have liked to have conducted a second focus group with study participants who had also participated in the interview. She feels there would have been a degree of comfort with that group, and the discussion could serve as an extension of past threads. Social organization groups may wish to further engage with adult learning professionals who wish to foster positive learning environments and communities. The activism work is the primary focus, but volunteer social action organizations who invest in their members' learning, development, and community connections may have a more committed group of activists.

The researcher was struck by how compelling and important the experience of being involved with Indivisible was for participants across the study. There was an opportunity for connection, support, learning, and positive social change through participation in Indivisible groups during the 2017-2020 timeframe. The researcher looks forward to learning more about how people are positively impacting their communities as learners, volunteers, and social action leaders, and hopes to contribute to a similar social action or civic group in the future.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form: Survey and Critical Incident Questionnaire

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street, New York, NY 10027

Protocol Title: Joining Indivisible as a New Activist:
A Case Study of Learning and Commitment

Principal Researcher: Jessica Stockton King, Teachers College
(917) 658-09XX, jxx215@tc.columbia.edu

INTRODUCTION You are invited to participate in this research study called “Joining Indivisible as a New Activist: A Case Study of Learning and Commitment.” You may qualify to take part in this research study because:

1. You were involved with Indivisible for at least two years from 2017-2020.
2. You were not actively involved in an activism group prior to the 2016 Election.
3. You are 18 years or older.

Approximately thirty to forty people will participate in this study and it will take 25-100 minutes of your time to complete over the course of two days.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE? This study is being done to learn more about the experiences of new activists who were involved in Indivisible from 2017-2020. The goal is to better understand participants’ learning through social action group involvement, as well as how participants were able to stay involved over time.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you decide to participate in this study:

You will have the opportunity to participate in a 25 minute survey and Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) in which you will first be asked demographic information, and then for one to four short written responses about self-selected events that you experienced as a participant in Indivisible. The recollected incidents can include as many or as few details as you can remember and feel comfortable sharing. The written responses will be assigned to the participant’s preferred pseudonym, or the researcher can choose one.

If, based on your survey responses, you meet the research criteria and indicate that you are interested in participating in a 60 minute interview or a 75 minute focus group, the primary researcher may contact you by email or phone to schedule an interview or focus group by Zoom. There is a separate informed consent form if you elect to move on to an interview or focus group.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking

routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. However, there are some risks to consider. You might also feel uncomfortable if memories of this time period were unpleasant for you. You do not have to answer any questions or share anything you do not want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.

The primary researcher is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, including using a pseudonym instead of your name, and keeping all information on a password protected computer with encrypted folders.

All research will be conducted remotely, which is due to the nature of the study. This will also help to mitigate risk associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit adult educators who wish to better understand how to teach and engage new adult activists.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY? You will not be paid to participate. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS? The study is over when you have completed the survey and Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) for a subset of participants. For participants who are willing to participate for a second conversation, the study will be over after they participate in the interview or focus group. However, you can always leave the study at any time, even if you have not finished.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY. The primary researcher will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio and video recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. For quality assurance, the study team, the study sponsor, and/or members of the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) may review the data collected from you as part of this study. Otherwise, all information obtained from your participation in this study will be held strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by U.S. or State law.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED? The results of this study may be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your identity will be removed from any data you provide before publication or use for educational purposes. Your name or any identifying information about you will not be published. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the primary researcher.

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY? If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the primary researcher, Jessica Stockton King, at (917) 658-09XX or at jXX215@tc.columbia.edu. You can also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Jeanne Bitterman at jebXX@tc.columbia.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or

email IRB@tc.edu or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 10027, Box 151. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT’S RIGHTS

- I have read the Informed Consent Form and have been offered the opportunity to discuss the form with the researcher.
- I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at the researcher’s professional discretion. This could happen if the participant states that they were not involved in Indivisible during the 2017-2020 window.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the researcher will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- Your data will not be used in further research studies.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent Form document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study:

Print name: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature: _____

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form—Interview

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street, New York, NY 10027

Protocol Title: Joining Indivisible as a New Activist:
A Case Study of Learning and Commitment

Principal Researcher: Jessica Stockton King, Teachers College
(917) 658-XXXX, jxx215@tc.columbia.edu

INTRODUCTION You are invited to participate in this research study called “Joining Indivisible as a New Activist: A Case Study of Motivation, Learning and Commitment.” You may qualify to take part in this research study because:

1. You were involved with Indivisible for at least two years from 2017-2020.
2. You were not actively involved in an activism group prior to the 2016 Election.
3. You are 18 years or older.

Approximately thirty to forty people will participate in this study and it will take 25-100 minutes of your time to complete over the course of two days.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE? This study is being done to learn more about the experiences of new activists who were involved in Indivisible from 2017-2020. The goal is to better understand participants’ learning through social action group involvement, as well as how participants were able to stay involved over time.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you decide to participate in this study:

You will have the opportunity to participate in a 25 minute survey and Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) in which you will first be asked demographic information, and then for one to four short written responses about self-selected events that you experienced as a participant in Indivisible. The recollected incidents can include as many or as few details as you can remember and feel comfortable sharing. The written responses will be assigned to the participant’s preferred pseudonym, or the researcher can choose one.

If, based on your survey responses, you meet the research criteria and indicate that you are interested in also participating in a 60 minute interview, the primary researcher may contact you by email or phone to schedule an interview or focus group by Zoom.

Participants selected for interviews will be asked to discuss their experience joining Indivisible, including the sustaining factors for them to become and stay involved. Participants will also be asked about learning or changes that occurred through their involvement. The study is focused on the experiences of people who were first involved during the 2017-2020 time period, so for

some people, that time might bring up memories of a turbulent time period. The interview will be conducted on Zoom or by phone, and will be recorded. After the recording is transcribed, the recording will be deleted. If you do not wish to be recorded, you will not be able to participate. The identity of participants will be kept confidential, and participants may elect to choose a pseudonym, or be assigned one. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes.

All of these procedures will be done remotely, at a time that is most convenient to you.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. However, there are some risks to consider. You might feel embarrassed to discuss any challenging times you encountered during social action involvement. You might also feel uncomfortable if memories of this time period were unpleasant for you. You do not have to answer any questions or share anything you do not want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.

The primary researcher is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, such as using a pseudonym instead of your name, and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer. Recordings will also be destroyed as soon as they have been transcribed, and the transcripts will not be published in full. Instead, the transcripts will be analyzed for themes and trends. While there might be short quotes from a transcript included within the dissertation, the researcher is particularly interested in any common experiences for participants.

All research will be conducted remotely, which is due to the nature of the study. This will also help to mitigate risk associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit adult educators who wish to better understand how to teach and engage new adult activists.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY? You will not be paid to participate. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS? The study is over when you have completed the survey and Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) for a subset of participants. For participants who are willing to participate for a second conversation, the study will be over after they participate in the interview. However, you can always leave the study at any time, even if you have not finished.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY The primary researcher will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio and video recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the audio recording will be written down and the audio recording will then be destroyed. There will be no record matching your real name with your pseudonym. For quality assurance, the study team, the study sponsor (grant agency), and/or members of the Teachers

College Institutional Review Board (IRB) may review the data collected from you as part of this study. Otherwise, all information obtained from your participation in this study will be held strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by U.S. or State law.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED? The results of this study may be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your identity will be removed from any data you provide before publication or use for educational purposes. Your name or any identifying information about you will not be published. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the primary researcher.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO AND OR VIDEO RECORDING Audio recording and video recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, you will still be able to participate in the survey and Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) part of this research. If you do not wish to be recorded, it will not be possible to participate in an interview or the focus group.

_____ **I give my consent to be recorded** _____
Signature

_____ **I do not consent to be recorded** _____
Signature

WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY Video and audio-recorded materials will not be shared at any conferences. Only the researcher, her Teachers College advisors, or potentially the IRB would see or listen to any recordings before they are destroyed.

Signature

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the primary researcher, Jessica Stockton King, at (917) 658-09XX or at jXX215@tc.columbia.edu. You can also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Jeanne Bitterman at jebXX@tc.columbia.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 10027, Box 151. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- I have read the Informed Consent Form and have been offered the opportunity to discuss the form with the researcher.
- I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at the researcher's professional discretion. This could happen if the participant states that they were not involved in Indivisible during the 2017-2020 window, or if scheduling an interview is not possible.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the researcher will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- Your data will not be used in further research studies.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent Form document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study:

Print name: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature: _____

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form—Focus Group

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street, New York, NY 10027

Protocol Title: Joining Indivisible as a New Activist:
A Case Study of Learning and Commitment

Principal Researcher: Jessica Stockton King, Teachers College
(917) 658-XXXX, jxx215@tc.columbia.edu

INTRODUCTION You are invited to participate in this research study called “Joining Indivisible as a New Activist: A Case Study of Learning and Commitment.” You may qualify to take part in this research study because:

1. You were involved with Indivisible for at least two years from 2017-2020.
2. You were not actively involved in an activism group prior to the 2016 Election.
3. You are 18 years or older.

Approximately thirty people will participate in this study and it will take 25-100 minutes of your time to complete over the course of two days.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE? This study is being done to learn more about the experiences of new activists who were involved in Indivisible from 2017-2020. The goal is to better understand participants’ learning through social action group involvement, as well as how participants were able to stay involved over time.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you decide to participate in this study:

You will have the opportunity to participate in a 25 minute survey and Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) in which you will first be asked demographic information, and then for one to four short written responses about self-selected events that you experienced as a participant in Indivisible. The recollected incidents can include as many or as few details as you can remember and feel comfortable sharing. The written responses will be assigned to the participant’s preferred pseudonym, or the researcher can choose one.

If, based on your survey responses, you meet the research criteria and indicate that you are interested in participating in a 75 minute focus group, the primary researcher may contact you by email or phone to schedule the focus group to be held on Zoom.

Participants selected for interviews will be asked to discuss their experience joining Indivisible, including the sustaining factors for them to become and stay involved. Participants will also be asked about learning or changes that occurred through their involvement. The study is focused on the experiences of people who were first involved during the 2017-2020 time period, so for

some people, that time might bring up memories of a turbulent time period. The focus group will be conducted and recorded on Zoom. The Zoom recording will be deleted after the audio has been transcribed by a professional transcriptionist at Rev.com or through Otter.ai, and analyzed by the researcher. Everyone will be asked not to discuss what is discussed outside of the group, but it is impossible to guarantee complete confidentiality. Participants can elect to turn their video on or keep it off. Participants can decide which Zoom alias they would like to use, or the researcher is happy to select one for them. The focus group session will take 60-70 minutes.

All of these procedures will be done remotely, at a time that is most convenient to you.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. However, there are some risks to consider. You might feel embarrassed to discuss any challenging times you encountered during social action involvement. You might also feel uncomfortable if memories of this time period were unpleasant for you. You do not have to answer any questions or share anything you do not want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.

The primary researcher is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, such as using a pseudonym instead of your name, and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer. Recordings will also be destroyed as soon as they have been transcribed, and the transcripts will not be published in full. Instead, the transcripts will be analyzed for themes and trends. While there might be short quotes from a transcript included within the dissertation, the researcher is particularly interested in any common experiences for participants.

All research will be conducted remotely, which is due to the nature of the study. This will also help to mitigate risk associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit adult educators who wish to better understand how to teach and engage new adult activists.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY? You will not be paid to participate. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS? The study is over when you have completed the survey and Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) for a subset of participants. For participants who are willing to participate for a second conversation, the study will be over after they participate in the interview or focus group. However, you can always leave the study at any time, even if you have not finished.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY The primary researcher will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio and video recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the audio recording will be written down and the audio recording will then be

destroyed. There will be no record matching your real name with your pseudonym. The transcriptionists at Rev have also signed confidentiality agreements with the company, and the data at Otter.ai is encrypted. For quality assurance, the study team, the study sponsor (grant agency), and/or members of the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) may review the data collected from you as part of this study. Otherwise, all information obtained from your participation in this study will be held strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by U.S. or State law.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED? The results of this study may be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your identity will be removed from any data you provide before publication or use for educational purposes. Your name or any identifying information about you will not be published. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the primary researcher.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO AND OR VIDEO RECORDING Audio recording and video recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, you will still be able to participate in the survey and Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) part of this research. If you do not wish to be recorded, it will not be possible to participate in an interview or the focus group.

_____ **I give my consent to be recorded** _____
Signature

_____ **I do not consent to be recorded** _____
Signature

WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY Video and audio-recorded materials will not be shared at any conferences. Only the researcher, her Teachers College advisors, or potentially the IRB would see or listen to any recordings before they are destroyed.

Signature

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the primary researcher, Jessica Stockton King, at (917) 658-XXXX or at jxx215@tc.columbia.edu. You can also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Jeanne Bitterman at jebxx@tc.columbia.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 10027, Box 151. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- I have read the Informed Consent Form and have been offered the opportunity to discuss the form with the researcher.
- I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at the researcher's professional discretion. This could happen if the participant states that they were not involved in Indivisible during the 2017-2020 window, or if scheduling an interview is not possible.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the researcher will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- Your data will not be used in further research studies.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent Form document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study:

Print name: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature: _____

Appendix D: Letter to Potential Participants

Dear [Name of Indivisible Chapter or Potential Participant],

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in a doctoral research study. The study is focused on the commitment and learning experiences of Indivisible members who were A. new to activism prior to the 2016 Election, and B. were involved with Indivisible for at least two years in the 2017-2020 window. The study seeks to learn more about the activists who became involved, what they might have learned along the way, their experiences with the community, as well as how they stayed involved despite any challenges. The researcher believes that a deeper understanding of the experiences of Indivisible members may be relevant for practitioners who wish to educate others interested in the betterment of society and a more participatory democracy. If you participate, your involvement will be kept completely confidential.

The first part of the study will take approximately 25 minutes and consists of:

- Reading and Signing an Informed Consent Form
- 14 Demographic questions
- 2 Scheduling questions
- 1-4 Critical Incident short response questions

If you are open to participating, please click on the Qualtrics Questionnaire here: [link]. If you would like to speak to me first to ask a question, please email jxx215@tc.columbia.edu or call me at (917) 658-09XX. At the end of the informed consent form and questionnaire, you have the options to sign-up for the second part of the study.

The second part will take approximately 60-75 minutes depending on if the participant chooses the Interview or Focus group option.

The interview will take approximately 60 minutes, and the focus group will take around 75 minutes. The focus group and the interviews will be temporarily recorded until they are transcribed and fully anonymized. The recordings will then be destroyed. Participants can leave the study at any time. If you have any questions, please let me know, and I am very grateful for your consideration. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,
Jessica

Jessica Stockton King
EdD Candidate, Adult Learning and Leadership
Teachers College, Columbia University
Email: jxx215@tc.columbia.edu Phone: (917) 658-XXXX
IRB Protocol: 22-343

Appendix E: Potential Email or Message Text for Indivisible Facebook Groups

Hi there! I'm looking to speak with people who joined Indivisible as new activists after the 2016 Election. If you participated in Indivisible for at least two years from 2017-2020, I'd love to send you information about a Teachers College doctoral research study focused on learning, community, and commitment. Please email me at jxx215@tc.columbia.edu for more information, or to ask any questions.

Thanks so much,

Jessica Stockton King
EdD candidate, Adult Learning & Leadership
Teachers College IRB Protocol: 22-343

Appendix F: Demographic Survey and Indivisible Critical Incident Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this study about the experiences of new Indivisible activists. The information that will be collected will be kept confidential, and will only be used for the purpose of this research study. The first questions will be used to establish your demographic information, the next two questions are related to possible future scheduling, and the final four prompts ask you to reflect and briefly share up to four experiences you had through your involvement in Indivisible.

1. What is your age range?
 - a. 18-25
 - b. 26-32
 - c. 33-40
 - d. 41-48
 - e. 49-56
 - f. 57-64
 - g. 65 or older

2. What is your gender identity?
 - a. man
 - b. genderqueer or genderfluid
 - c. non-binary
 - d. woman
 - e. Additional gender category/identity not listed (please specify below)
Gender Identity _____
 - f. Prefer not to answer

3. What is your race/ethnicity?
 - a. Arabic
 - b. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - c. Black
 - d. Caucasian/White
 - e. Hispanic
 - f. Latino/Latinx
 - g. Multiracial
 - h. Native American
 - i. Other _____
 - j. Prefer not to answer

4. Are you a parent, or have you been significantly involved in a child's life?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Yes, as a foster parent
 - d. Yes, as an aunt, uncle, or godparent
 - e. Other (please explain)_____

5. What part of the country do you reside?
 - a. New England
 - b. Mid-Atlantic
 - c. The South
 - d. The Midwest
 - e. The Southwest
 - f. The West
 - g. Other _____

6. How would you classify the area where you live?
 - a. Rural
 - b. Suburban
 - c. Urban
 - d. Other _____

7. What is your highest level of education?
 - a. High school
 - b. Associate's Degree
 - c. Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)
 - d. Master's Degree (MA, MS)
 - e. Professional Master's Degree or Other Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc)
 - f. Doctoral Degree
 - g. Other _____
 - k. Prefer not to Answer

8. What is your primary industry of professional experience?
 - a. Architecture/Design
 - b. Accounting/Finance
 - c. Advertising/Marketing
 - d. Arts/Entertainment/Media
 - e. Computer Science/Engineering/Technology
 - f. Construction
 - g. Consulting

- h. Education/Teaching
 - i. Food Service/Hospitality/Tourism
 - j. Insurance
 - k. Journalism and Publishing
 - l. Law
 - m. Non-profit
 - n. Real Estate
 - o. Research
 - p. Other _____
9. How many years of professional experience do you have?
- a. 0-5
 - b. 6-10
 - c. 11-15
 - d. 16-20
 - e. 21-25
 - f. 26-30
 - g. 31 or more
10. What is your level of professional experience?
- a. Entry level
 - b. Intermediate/Experienced level
 - c. Management
 - d. Senior Management
 - e. Executive Level
 - f. Self-employed
 - g. Sole practitioner
 - h. Not applicable
 - i. Other _____
11. How many years have you been involved with Indivisible?
- a. 2
 - b. 3
 - c. 4
 - d. 5+
12. Have you had a leadership role with Indivisible (in any capacity)?
- a. no
 - b. yes
 - c. Other _____

13. Are you currently involved with Indivisible?
- Yes
 - No
 - No, but I will be again soon.
 - No, but I am involved with a similar organization.
 - No, but I am involved in an unrelated organization.
 - Other _____
14. Have you been involved as a volunteer in any other social action or civic engagement groups since 2017?
- Yes
 - No
 - No, but I have plans to become involved with a group like this.
 - Other (or additional thoughts): _____
15. Are you open to participating in an Interview or Focus Group, to be scheduled at your convenience?
- Interview
 - Focus Group
 - I'd be open to participating in either one.
 - Not at this time.
16. If you are willing to potentially participate in an interview or Focus Group, please include an email address and/or phone number below for scheduling purposes only. You may also contact jXX215@tc.columbia.edu directly if that is preferred. Thank you!
- _____

Critical Incident Written Response (Final 4 Prompts)

In this next section, you will be asked to think back to your involvement in Indivisible, and some salient experiences you might have had. Any details or specific examples you can include below are valuable. Please answer the prompts below, either in the text field, or by recording a voice audio. If you record an audio clip, it will be deleted after it is transcribed.

(Additional option: If you'd like to record your responses to voicemail, please call the Google Voice number (917) 633-XXXX and record your message. You can simply state your pseudonym, and then number 1, 2, 3, or 4. Messages are limited to three minutes per call, but you can call back more than once to answer additional questions, or share more thoughts.)

- Please describe a time when you learned something new through your involvement in the Indivisible community. This could be something small or something big, and it could relate to organizing, a specific skill or how to use equipment, how laws affect specific people, or something related to policy, the government, society, or about yourself.

Please share any details that you can remember about the situation, what you learned, and who you learned it from. How did the learning take place? Do you remember how you felt at the time? Was this the start of any additional learning? What thoughts or feelings do you have about this experience looking back today?

2. Please share something about yourself that has changed, that you would attribute to your involvement with Indivisible, social action, or civic engagement initiatives. This could be something minor or significant, and it could relate to a perspective change, a change in something you value or your values, a newfound interest in something, the development of leadership skills, or the way in which you see the world.

Please be as specific as possible, including what changed, and why or how you think you have changed in this way. Did the change happen quickly or slowly over time? Did you notice it happening? How did you, and do you, feel about you changing in this way? Did anyone in the group help your change in this way, and if so, how? Were there any roadblocks to change? If so, how did you deal with them?

3. Please describe a time when you felt connected to a person or people in your Indivisible community.

Please describe the person or people (pseudonyms are great) and the roles of the people that you felt connected to on this occasion. How did you come to know these people in the group, and what kind of activities (if any) had you worked with them on? How did you have the opportunity to interact with each other? Thinking back to the time you felt connected, what do you think made you feel this way in this specific incident?

4. Please describe a time when you felt disconnected during your time with Indivisible.

Please describe the specific incident, any people involved, and why you think you felt disconnected at that moment. Was there a connection to the greater group or umbrella organization making you feel this way, and if so, how? Thinking back, is there anything that could have happened to make you feel less disconnected in that moment? If you feel comfortable, please share how you were feeling at the time, and how you feel thinking back to this specific time.

Appendix G: Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this interview today. I'm really interested in learning more about people's experiences in Indivisible, especially related to any learning or growth that has taken place along the way. I hope to understand more about what keeps people involved in organizations like Indivisible, and I appreciate your time. I am going to record this interview so that I can listen to what you are sharing with me, and then this recording will be used to make a transcript of our conversation today. After the transcription has been made, the recording will be destroyed. The transcript will then be used in conjunction with transcripts of other interviews to analyze for possible themes or salient experiences. My job is to make sure that no one is identified, and we can start by picking a name for your pseudonym if that is all right. You can pick a name now, or I'm happy to choose one for you. (After the name has been decided).

Thank you. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

-Some people have called the 2016 Election results as "shocking," while others were not surprised. Can you walk me through how you were feeling at the time in November 2016, and what your initial thoughts were that month?

-How did you first become aware of Indivisible? (If there is a short response: Do you remember any impressions you had about Indivisible at the beginning? How did you feel about what they were doing or trying to accomplish?)

-Can you tell me the story of how you became involved with your local Indivisible chapter? (Possible follow-ups: What drew you to Indivisible in the beginning? What were you thinking and feeling about your participation in your first meetings? Did you have many questions about what to do? Did your feelings change over time, and if so, how so? Were there any other groups that you had thought about committing to yourself rather than Indivisible?)

-Moving past initial experiences, if you were talking to someone ten or twenty years from now, and they wanted to know what it was like to be a part of Indivisible, what would you share with them about your experiences? (Follow-ups: Can you think of one really memorable action, meeting, initiative, day, or moment that you had through the group? How would you describe it?)

-When I say the word "community," what does that bring to mind when thinking about Indivisible? This can be more than one description or level, I'm just interested more in the role of community as it relates to your specific experience. (Follow-ups: Are you involved in more than one community within the group? Are you involved in any coalition work, and if so, what does that look like in your life?)

-How did you find your place within your group? (Follow-up: Was there anything you felt uncertain about as you found your place? How did you deal with that uncertainty? Did you do

any research or learning on your own to be ready for your group activities? Has your role within the group changed over time, and if so, how does it look different today?)

-I'm really interested in the role of learning, and what that can look like for adults in various settings. Can you think of anything that you've learned because of your involvement in Indivisible? (Follow-ups: How did you learn that? Was there a specific person who helped you with that, and how did they aid in your learning? Was there anything challenging about the experiences, or were there any barriers to learning more? Also, said differently if they can't think of anything: Can you think of anything that you know now that you didn't know prior to your involvement with Indivisible?)

-When thinking about yourself, and who you were prior to involvement in Indivisible and social action work, are there any things that have changed about who you feel you are or what you value? (Follow-ups: In terms of identity, has your involvement in Indivisible changed anything about your identity or how you identify? Is there anything you value more or less? If so, why do you think this is? Have any of your thoughts about society changed, and if so, how so?)

-In thinking about a community-based group like Indivisible, what have your experiences taught you about organizing? (Follow-ups: What elements within a group are important for organizing or initiatives to be effective? Were there any surprises when you became involved in this work, or things you didn't anticipate? How did you handle that surprise or situation in the moment and afterwards?)

-Some people are involved in discussion groups in adulthood, either within a continuing education setting, a book club, a civic group, a religious organization, etc. In thinking about your experiences with Indivisible, were there any adult discussion groups (informal or formal) that developed within your group? (Follow-ups: If so, did these groups meet regularly, or was it more informal? How did they develop? How were you involved? Are there any things that you remember from an engaging conversation? Did any of your conversations lead to you changing a prior belief, and if so, do you feel comfortable speaking a little more about that?)

-Reflecting back to your experiences, was there anyone who was influential within the group for your own personal learning or development? (Possible follow-ups: How did them being a part of the group change your experience, and if relevant, what did you learn from them? How did they interact with you, and the group?)

-Were you able to contribute any prior knowledge or experiences to the group to help them with their goals? (How did being able to contribute this knowledge make you feel? Were you able to build upon your knowledge or grow more in this area? How did this happen?)

-What was the most challenging part of being involved with Indivisible? (Follow-up, what has kept you going when times have been tough, or there has been disappointment?)

-What was the most satisfying part of being involved with Indivisible? (How were you supported in the organization? How did you celebrate when you found success?)

-Are you engaged in any regular reflective practices (journaling, keeping a diary, discussion group, meditation)? (Possible follow-up: Are there any ways that you dealt with stress or disappointment around your activism? What did your friends or families think about your involvement with Indivisible? Were they supportive, or if not, how did you deal with them?)

-What would you recommend to an organization like Indivisible that wanted to make the experience worthwhile for participants like yourself? (Possible follow-up: If you could change one thing about your group or the experience of participating today, what would that be?)

-What would you recommend to someone thinking about joining a social action or civic engagement organization for the first time? (Possible follow-up: How would you recommend they choose a group to dedicate their efforts? From your experience and knowledge through past involvement, is there anything you'd recommend that they avoid, and why?)

-What are your plans for participation in social action or civic engagement groups in the future? (Follow-up, why does this path interest you now? Do you have any other learning goals related to this work, and if so, what are they?)

-Are there any people that you stay in touch with from your Indivisible group, even if you can't see them regularly? (Follow-up: What do you value about your relationship with this person?)

Thank you so much for your time, and valuable perspective. I really enjoyed our conversation, and I hope that I can share my findings with you in the future.

Appendix H: Focus Group Discussion Guide

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to come to the focus group today! My name is Jessica Stockton King, and I am the principal researcher in this study. I am conducting this research for my doctoral research and dissertation in the Adult Learning and Leadership Program at Teachers College. The focus of this research is on the commitment and learning experiences of new activists who became involved in Indivisible for a minimum of 2 years after the 2016 Elections. I have already conducted half of the interviews for this research study, so not only am I interested in your experiences, I'd like to run some preliminary themes that have come up so far to get your take on them.

I'd like to just set a few norms at the outset. I'd like this to be an open, judgment-free space where everyone has the chance to share their perspective. If something comes to mind while someone else is talking, or you prefer to share something in a written format, please feel free to enter any thoughts in the chat. I use Zoom chat frequently in larger group meetings, and can be helpful to hear from more group members during tight time windows. If you agree with someone or relate with their response, you can share that too. When I ask a new question, I will also cut and paste it into the chat.

Everything said in this focus group should stay confidential, and please do not share anyone's personal experiences or names externally. If you haven't already, please feel free to anonymize your Zoom name as a pseudonym, or I will do that for you during the transcription process. It is your choice whether you'd like to have your camera on or off for this focus group. If you need to take a break or withdraw, that is also of course allowed at any time.

I want to be respectful of everyone's schedules, so 5 minutes before we reach 75 minutes, I'll put a note in the chat or announce it. With that, let's begin!

Questions

1. Just to start out as an icebreaker, can everyone please share how you first found out about Indivisible, why you chose to join the group, and optionally, any favorite memories or actions that come to mind?
2. Can anyone remember any times that they felt challenged to stay involved with Indivisible initiatives? What helped you to deal with those challenges?
3. Sometimes people learn within the context of organizations or in communities. For everyone in the group, is there anything that you *know now* that you didn't know prior to becoming involved with Indivisible?
4. Building off that question, is there anything different about you from before you were involved to present day that you would attribute to your social action involvement? Does anyone feel like they have developed more personally through their involvement? If so and you feel comfortable sharing, what has changed, and how has that unfolded in your life?

4. Were you able to incorporate any prior knowledge or talents into the group (this could be a special skill, past knowledge that you gained from professional experience, an innate ability, etc)? Was there anything that you taught someone?
5. What was it like being part of a developing group, and how did you all find your place?
6. For the group, how could you have been better supported as a new activist?
7. What made you feel connected within the group?
8. Was there anything over the course of your involvement that made you feel disconnected?
9. Is there anything that you wish that you had known before becoming involved? Said another way, what would you recommend to someone else about to embark on activism work for the first time in adulthood?
10. What would you recommend to educators or organizational leaders to make Indivisible members on the ground feel supported and to stay engaged in their work?
11. How, if at all, do you anticipate being involved in social action or civic engagement work going forward?
12. Additional Themes to run by the focus group (if applicable from the interviews).

III. **Close and Thank you**

Thank you so much for participating in the focus group today! I am so grateful for your time and dedication. If you have any follow-up thoughts, feelings, or insights that you'd like to share at a later date, please feel free to email me (jas215@tc.columbia.edu) or call (917-658-XXXX). I'm putting those both in the chat now. Once again, thank you for your time, and I hope that you have a good rest of the day!

Appendix I: Preliminary Coding Scheme

Factors for Sustained Commitment (These factors helped me to stay involved...)

SCC	Critical consciousness (Brookfield, 2019; Daloz et al., 1996; Farago et al., 2018; Freire, 1998)
SCRf	Community relationships or friendships (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009; Brown & Shaked, 2018; Daloz et al., 1996; Ganz, 2009; Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Greenberg & Levin, 2019; Horton, 2003; Ollis, 2012; Schon, 1987b)
SEE	Emotional engagement (Ganz, 2019; Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Ollis, 2012)
SFOA	Feelings of agency (Bandura, 2001; Greenberg & Levin, 2009, Kilgore, 1999)
SFPM	Feeling like I had a purpose or meaning (Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Greenberg & Levin, 2009, Kilgore, 1999)
SGFLL	Growth: Feeling like I was learning or developing capacity as a leader (Ganz, 2009; Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Stowe, 2013)
SHDHT	Habit of dialogue and holistic thought (Daloz et al., 1996, Freire, 1998; Horton, 2003; Schon, 1987b)
SICAW	Having my identity change to be aligned with the work (Daloz et al., 1996; Ollis, 2012)
SLSGL	Leadership style of group leaders (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009, Daloz et al., 1996; Ganz, 2009; Greenberg & Levin, 2019)
SMDMP	Making a difference and thinking more was possible (Ganz, 2009; Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Greenberg & Levin, 2019)
SRPJW	Participating in a Reflective practice: Journaling or writing (Boud & Walker, 1993; Chirema, 2006; Finch et al., 2015; Morris, 2021)
SRPM	Participating in a Reflective practice: Meditating (Boud & Walker, 1993; Chirema, 2006; Finch et al., 2015; Morris, 2021)
SC	Self-care (Driscoll, 2022)

What hindered your involvement (These factors made it difficult to stay involved...)

DBNT	Burnout (Cahill & Mold, 2018; Chen & Gorski, 2015; Gorski et al., 2019; Logan et al., 2017)
DCRF	Low levels of discussion or limited community/group relationships (Corrigall-Brown, 2021)
DEEC	Duties exceeded energy or capacity (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009)
DIN	Disagreement with direction of Indivisible National (Skocpol, 2021)
DVA	Disagreement with values, approaches (Skocpol, 2021)
DEMP	Felt disempowered (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009)
DFUA	Felt underappreciated (Gorski et al., 2019)
DGD	Group dynamics or issues with group members (Stockman, 2018)
DLSGL	Leadership style of group leaders was ineffective (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009)
DOC	Organizational challenges (Gorski et al., 2019; Han & Oyakawa, 2018; Skocpol, 2021)
DPPI	Professional or personal issues (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009; Gorski, 2019)
DSC	Structural causes: Seems impossible to enact change (Gorski, 2019)

Describe Learning and changes

LACORG	Activism and how to organize (Ganz, 2009; Greenberg & Levin, 2019; Horton, 2003)
LAGY	Agency (Bandura, 2001; Greenberg & Levin, 2009, Kilgore, 1999)
LCEV	Learnings about current health, social, political, and environmental issues (Stowe, 2013)
LCOLLD	Collective leadership (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009; Ganz, 2009)
LCOM	How to create community and work with others (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009; Horton, 2003)
LCR	Critical reflection (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009)
LCUPK	How to contribute and use prior knowledge in a new setting (Ganz, 2009; Greenberg & Levin, 2009)
LDEM	Learning about democracy (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009; Greenberg & Levin, 2019)
LDEMIN	Development of empathy and sense of injustice (Costa et al., 2021)
LHRSPR	How to recontextualize or solve a problem (Ganz, 2009; Stowe 2013)
LIC	Increased consciousness (Kilgore, 1999)
LLDPD	Leadership or personal development (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009; Ganz, 2009; Greenberg & Levin, 2019)
LSHP	Learning to sustain hope and persevere (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009)
LSTY	Storytelling (Daloz et al., 1996; Greenberg & Levin)
LSW	Sense of worthiness (Kilgore, 1999)
LTQ	Learning to question (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009; Freire, 1998; Horton, 2003)

Helpful for Learning (It helped my learning by having or engaging in...)

ACOP	Community of practice (Schon, 1987b)
ACRF	Community relationships or friendships (Ganz, 2009; Greenberg & Levin, 2019)
ADGD	Discussion groups or opportunity for dialogue (Lindeman, 1945; Daloz et al., 1996)
AGSL	Generational spillover (Whittier, 2018)
AIGCTL	Indivisible guides or collateral from the central organization (Greenberg & Levin, 2019)
ALSGL	Leadership style of group leaders (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009)
AOAG	Online activism groups (Schroeder et al., 2020)
APXS	Praxis, and the chance to act in a situation and learn how to adjust (Freire 1993; Ganz 2009; Greenberg & Levin, 2019; Schon, 1987b)
ARPJW	Participating in a Reflective practice: Journaling or writing (Boud & Walker, 1993; Chirema, 2006; Finch et al., 2015; Morris, 2021)
ARPM	Participating in a Reflective practice: Meditating (Boud & Walker, 1993; Chirema, 2006; Finch et al., 2015; Morris, 2021)
ASFOG	Support from others in group (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009)
ASFOO	Support from others outside group (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009)
ATRRC	Time to reflect and to reconsider situations (Boud & Walker, 1993)

Hinders Learning (It hindered my learning by having...)

HBNT	Burnout (Logan et al., 2017)
HDGD	Limited opportunities to talk to group members or peers about experience (Boud & Walker, 1993)
HLNIE	Limited noticing and intervening in experience (Boud & Walker, 1993)
HLPTP	Lack of preparation or time to prepare (Boud & Walker, 1993)
HLPTR	Lack of time to reflect (Boud & Walker, 1993)
HLSGL	Leadership style of group leaders was ineffective (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009)

Role of Community (What role did community play?...)

CRF	Community relationships or friendships (Ganz, 2009; Greenberg & Levin, 2019)
CDGD	Discussion groups or opportunity for dialogue (Lindeman, 1945; Daloz et al., 1996)
CHRSPR	How to recontextualize or solve a problem (Ganz, 2009; Stowe 2013)
COTHS	Exposure to ‘otherness’ and different points of view (Daloz et al., 1996)
CRM	Role Models (Moss et al., 2021)
CTMWK	Teamwork (Stowe, 2013)

Positive Aspects of Community (facilitated learning or growth)

PDLG	Dialogue (Ganz, 2009)
PILS	Inspiring leadership style among community (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009)
PMM	Meaning-making together (Schon, 1987b)
POFPS	Opportunity for problem-solving experiences (Stowe, 2013)
PSFOG	Support from others in group (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009)

Negative Aspects of Community (impeded learning or growth)

NPLS	Leadership style of group leaders (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009)
NWSE	Not working for the same end or goals (Ganz, 2009)

Appendix J: Final Coding Scheme

Factors for Sustained Involvement			
Finding	Code	Thematic Category	Literature or Emergent
SF1	SCGTE	Committed community members and relationships	Brookfield & Preskill (2009); Brown & Shaked (2018); Daloz et al. (1996), Ganz (2009), Gose Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Greenberg & Levin, 2019; Horton, 2003; Ollis, 2012; Schon, 1987b)
SF2	SEE	Emotional engagement and passion for the work	Ganz, 2019; Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Ollis, 2012
SF3	SCC	Increased consciousness	Brookfield, 2019; Daloz et al., 1996; Farago et al., 2018; Freire, 1998
SF4	SSOD	Sense of duty and values, not an option to quit	Emergent
SF5	SMNP	Motivated by the opposition	Emergent
SF6	SMDMP	Making a difference and thinking more was possible	Ganz, 2009; Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Greenberg & Levin, 2019
SF7	SFPM	Feeling like they had a purpose or meaning	Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Greenberg & Levin, 2009, Kilgore, 1999
SF8	SICAW	Having their identity change to be aligned	Daloz et al., 1996; Ollis, 2012

Sub-factors that helped to sustain involvement			
Finding	Code	Thematic category	Literature or Emergent
SI1	SCON	Things the participant wants to be a part of or accomplish	Emergent
SI2	SFA	Participants felt appreciated, received validation	Emergent
SI3	SFLX	Flexible format, worked for interests and contexts	Emergent
SI4	SSFF	Supportive family members and friends	Emergent
SI5	SMHAE	Motivated by hope, and elections (which create hope)	Emergent
SI6	SREC	Realized they are one among many, every bit counts	Emergent
SI7	STTW	Taking breaks from the work and technology	Emergent
Factors that Hindered Involvement			
Finding	Code	Thematic category	Literature or Emergent
HI1	DBNT	Burnout hindered involvement	Cahill & Mold, 2018; Chen & Gorski, 2015; Gorski et al., 2019; Logan et al., 2017
HI2	DGD	Group dynamics or issues with group members	Stockman, 2018
HI3	DVA	Disagreement with values or approaches	Skocpol, 2021

Learning and changes			
Finding	Code	Thematic category	Literature or Emergent
LF1	LLHTP	Learning how to be an effective citizen and get things done	Emergent
LF2	LACORG	Participants learned about activism and how to organized	Ganz, 2009; Greenberg & Levin, 2019; Horton,2003
LF3	LCEV	Participants learned about health, social, political, etc	Stowe, 2013
LF4	LCUPK	Participants learned to contribute and use prior knowledge	Ganz, 2009; Greenberg & Levin, 2009
LF5	LCOM	Participants learned to create community and work together	Brookfield & Preskill, 2009; Horton, 2003
LF6	LIC	Participants had increased consciousness	Kilgore, 1999
LF7	LLDPD	Participants experienced leadership and personal development	Brookfield & Preskill, 2009; Ganz, 2009; Greenberg & Levin, 2019
LF8	LMCOC	Ventured out of comfort zone, and gained confidence	Emergent
LF9	EMP	Participants felt empowered	Emergent
LF10	LASSV	Participants became more assertive	Emergent
LF11	LBMP	Becoming more political and politically engaged	Emergent

Community Facilitators for Learning			
Finding	Code	Thematic category	Literature or Emergent
CF1	ACRF	Community relationships and friendships	Ganz, 2009; Greenberg & Levin, 2019
CF2	COLMP	Participants felt comfortable with like-minded people	Emergent
CF3	PSFOG	Group members provided different kinds of support	Brookfield & Preskill, 2009
CF4	ADGD	Group discussion and dialogue supported learning	Lindeman, 1945; Daloz et al., 1996
CF5	CPFE	There was a place for everyone	Emergent
CF6	PILS	Participants learned from inspiring leadership	Brookfield & Preskill, 2009
CF7	AOCG	Opportunities with coalition groups facilitated learning	Emergent
CF8	POGTKP	Participants gained access to politicians or public figures	Emergent
CF9	ARES	Resources, training and workshops	Emergent

Community Impediments to Learning			
Finding	Code	Thematic category	Literature or Emergent
CI1	NWSE	Participants felt they were not working for the same goals	Ganz, 2009
CI2	NEVB	Everyone is busy, limited bandwidth	Emergent
CI3	NCOV	COVID-19 Limited in-person meetings or affected group	Emergent

Appendix K: Demographic Table

Participant Identifier (n=55)	Age Range	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Parent, or involved as a parental figure?	Part of the country	Area Classification	Highest level of education	Primary industry of professional experience	Level of professional experience	Years of professional experience	Years involved with Indivisible	Leadership role with Indivisible (Y/N)	Currently involvement status with Indivisible	Involvement with other social action or civic engagement groups since 2017	Last Format of Study Participation
1	33-40	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Southwest	Suburban	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Computer Science/ Engineering/ Technology	Intermediate/ Experienced level	11-15	2	No	Yes	Yes	CIQ
2	57-64	Man	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Southwest	Suburban	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Other-Sales	Self-employed	31 or more	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	CIQ
3	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	West	Rural	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Education/ Teaching	Not applicable	26-30	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	CIQ
4	49-56	Man	Caucasian/ White	No	Southwest	Suburban	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Food Service	Intermediate/ Experienced level	31 or more	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	CIQ
5	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	No	Southwest	Urban	Professional Master's Degree or Other Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc)	Insurance	Intermediate/ Experienced level	26-30	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	CIQ
6	57-64	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Midwest	Suburban	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Advertising/ Marketing	Senior Management	26-30	5+	No	Yes	Yes	CIQ
7	65 or older	Nonbinary	Caucasian/ White	No	Southwest	Rural	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Other- Occupational Safety and Health	Intermediate/ Experienced level	26-30	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	CIQ
8	49-56	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Midwest	Suburban	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Nonprofit	Senior Management	21-25	5+	No	Yes	No	CIQ
9	57-64	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Mid-Atlantic	Suburban	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Accounting/ Finance	Senior Management	31 or more	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	CIQ
10	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Midwest	Suburban	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Consulting	Self-employed	31 or more	5+	No	Yes	Yes	CIQ
11	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Southwest	Urban	Professional Master's Degree	Other- Retail	Management	31 or more	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	CIQ
12	57-64	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Midwest	Suburban	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Education/ Teaching	Intermediate/ Experienced level	21-25	5+	No	Yes	No	CIQ
13	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Midwest	Rural	Doctoral Degree	Other- Healthcare	Other- Scholar	31 or more	3	No	Other- As a consumer and user of information from Indivisible	Yes	CIQ
14	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	The West	Suburban	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Accounting/ Finance	Senior Management	31 or more	5+	No	Yes	No	CIQ
15	57-64	Woman	Other- Jewish	Yes	Mid-Atlantic	Rural	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Other- Healthcare	Sole Practitioner	26-30	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	CIQ
16	49-56	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Midwest	Urban	Professional Master's Degree or Other Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc)	Other- Healthcare	Other- Physician owner	16-20	5+	Yes	No, but I will be again soon	Yes	CIQ
17	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Mid-Atlantic	Rural	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Other- Financial planning, retired	Other- All levels during my career	31 or more	5+	Yes	Yes	No	CIQ
18	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	New England	Rural	Professional Master's Degree or Other Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc)	Other- Healthcare	Executive level	31 or more	5+	Yes	Yes	No	CIQ

Participant Identifier (n=55)	Age Range	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Parent, or involved as a parental figure?	Part of the country	Area Classification	Highest level of education	Primary industry of professional experience	Level of professional experience	Years of professional experience	Years involved with Indivisible	Leadership role with Indivisible (Y/N)	Currently involvement status with Indivisible	Involvement with other social action or civic engagement groups since 2017	Last Format of Study Participation
19	49-56	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	South	Suburban	Professional Master's Degree or Other Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc)	Other- Healthcare	Other - Physician owner	16-20	4	No	Yes	Yes	CIQ
20	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	No	Midwest	Suburban	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Education/ Teaching	Senior Management	31 or more	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	CIQ
21	57-64	Woman	Caucasian/ White	No	Midwest	Suburban	Professional Master's Degree or Other Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc)	Law	Executive level	31 or more	4	No	Yes	Yes	CIQ
22	26-32	Nonbinary	Caucasian/ White	No	New England	Suburban	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Other- Archaeology, now social work	Entry level	0-5	2	No	Yes	No	CIQ
23	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Midwest	Suburban	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Other- Human Resources	Intermediate/ Experienced level	31 or more	5+	No	Yes	Yes	CIQ
24	57-64	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	New England	Other- small city in a rural county	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Other- Community Banking	Management	0-5	5+	Yes	Yes	No	CIQ
25	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	No	South	Suburban	Doctoral Degree	Other	Sole proprietor	31 or more	5+	Yes	No	Yes	CIQ
26	57-64	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Mid-Atlantic	Urban	Doctoral Degree	Education/ Teaching	Other- Psychologist in a school	31 or more	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	CIQ
27	41-48	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Midwest	Suburban	Doctoral Degree	Education/ Teaching	Not applicable	16-20	4	Yes	No	Yes	CIQ
28	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	South	Suburban	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Education/ Teaching	Other - Assistant Professor	31 or more	5+	No	Yes	Yes	CIQ
29	57-64	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Southwest	Rural	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Education/ Teaching	Not applicable	26-30	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	CIQ
30	57-64	Woman	Black	Yes	Southwest	Suburban	Professional Master's Degree or Other Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc)	Other - Clean Energy Technology	Executive level	31 or more	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Interview
31	57-64	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Mid-Atlantic	Suburban	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Other- Social Work	Management	31 or more	4	No	Yes	Yes	Interview
32	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Southwest	Suburban	Associate's Degree	Travel Agent	Self-employed	31 or more	5+	Yes	Yes	No	Interview
33	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	No	Midwest	Urban	Associate's Degree	Computer Science/ Engineering/ Technology	Senior Management	31 or more	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Interview
34	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	No	West	Rural	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Other - Human Resources	Executive level	26-30	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Interview
35	65 or older	Woman	Latinx	Yes	Southwest	Other- urban in a rural environment	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	International Development Assistance	Not applicable	26-30	5+	Yes	Yes	No	Interview
36	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Southwest	Suburban	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Other - Human Resources	Management	11-15	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Interview
37	49-56	Man	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Southwest	Rural	High School	Arts/ Entertainment/ Media	Self-employed	26-30	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Interview
38	65 or older	Man	Caucasian/ White	Yes	West	Rural	High School	Consulting	Sole Practitioner	21-25	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Interview
39	57-64	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes, as an aunt, uncle, or godparent	Midwest	Urban	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Computer Science/Engineering/Technology	Executive level	26-30	4	Yes	Yes	No	Interview

Participant Identifier (n=55)	Age Range	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Parent, or involved as a parental figure?	Part of the country	Area Classification	Highest level of education	Primary industry of professional experience	Level of professional experience	Years of profession at experience	Years involved with indivisible	Leadership role with indivisible (Y/N)	Currently involvement status with indivisible	Involvement with other social action or civic engagement groups since 2017	Last Format of Study Participation
40	65 or older	Man	Caucasian/ White	No	Southwest	Suburban	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Computer Science/ Engineering/ Technology	Management	31 or more	3	No	Yes	No	Interview
41	49-56	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	West	Suburban	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Accounting/ Finance	Senior Management	31 or more	5+	No	Yes	Yes	Interview
42	65 or older	Man	Caucasian/ White	Other - married to a woman with two children	West	Rural	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Computer Science/ Engineering/ Technology	Self-employed	31 or more	5+	Yes	Yes	No	Interview
43	65 or older	Man	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Midwest	Urban	Doctoral Degree	Education/ Teaching	Executive level	31 or more	4	Yes	Yes	No	Interview
44	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	South	Suburban	Professional Master's Degree or Other Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc)	Other- Healthcare	Intermediate/ Experienced level	26-30	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Interview
45	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	West	Suburban	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Other - Counseling	Not applicable	21-25	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Interview
46	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes, as an aunt, uncle, or godparent	Southwest	Urban	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Education/ Teaching	Management	31 or more	5+	Yes	Yes	No	Interview
47	49-56	Woman	Caucasian/ White	Yes	Mid-Atlantic	Suburban	Professional Master's Degree or Other Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc)	Other - Healthcare Research	Senior Management	21-25	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Interview
48	57-64	Woman	Caucasian/White	Yes	Mid-Atlantic	Suburban	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Arts/ Entertainment/ Media	Management	26-30	5+	No	Yes	Yes	Interview
49	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/White	Yes	Mid-Atlantic	Suburban	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Journalism and Publishing	Self-employed	31 or more	5+	Yes	Yes	No	Interview
50	41-48	Man	Other- Jewish	Yes	Mid-Atlantic	Urban	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Journalism and Publishing	Self-employed	16-20	5+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Interview
51	57-64	Man	Caucasian/White	Yes	Mid-Atlantic	Urban	Professional Master's Degree or Other Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc)	Law	Intermediate/ Experienced level	31 or more	5+	No	Yes	No	Interview
52	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/White	No	South	Urban	Master's Degree (MA or MS)	Architecture/ Design	Other - Instructor in design	26-30	4	No	Yes	Yes	Focus Group
53	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/White	Yes	Southwest	Urban	Doctoral Degree	Education/ Teaching	Executive level	31 or more	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Focus Group
54	65 or older	Woman	Caucasian/White	Yes	Midwest	Suburban	Professional Master's Degree or Other Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc)	Computer Science/ Engineering/ Technology	Management	26-30	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Focus Group
55	49-56	Woman	Caucasian/White	Yes, as an aunt, uncle, or godparent	Midwest	Suburban	Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA)	Architecture/ Design	Other - Senior Creative	26-30	5+	Yes	Yes	No	Focus Group

Appendix L: Table of Sustained Involvement Factors (SF) by Code and Method (CIQs)

Sustaining Factor number	Code	Descriptor	CIQ total (n=55)	CIQ %	CIQ only participants (n=29)	CIQ only participants % (n=29)	CIQ total for Group B (n=22)	CIQ % for Group B (n=22)	CIQ total for Group C (n=4)	CIQ % for Group C (n=4)
SF1	SCGTE	Community members who were committed, and relationships with Indivisible members kept participants involved	24	44%	11	38%	11	50%	2	50%
SF2	SEE	Emotional engagement and passion for the work led to sustained involvement	12	22%	6	21%	5	23%	1	25%
SF3	SCC	Increased or Critical Consciousness kept participants involved	11	20%	5	17%	6	27%	0	0%
SF4	SSOD	Having a strong belief system, sense of duty, and conviction that it was not an option to quit	17	31%	5	17%	10	45%	2	50%
SF5	SMNP	Participants stayed involved because they were motivated by the opposition	12	22%	3	10%	8	36%	1	25%
SF6	SMDMP	Making a difference and thinking more was possible	23	42%	13	45%	8	36%	2	50%
SF7	SFPM	Feeling like they had a purpose or meaning	9	16%	3	10%	5	23%	1	25%
SF8	SICAW	Having their identity change to be aligned with the work	11	20%	4	14%	7	32%	0	0%

Sustaining Factor number	Code	Descriptor	Interview total (n=22)	Interview %	Interview + CIQ combined for Group B, no duplicate cases (n=22)	Interview + CIQ combined % for Group B, no duplicate cases	Focus Group Total (n=4)	Focus Group % for Group C (n=4)	Focus Group + CIQ combined for Group C, no duplicate cases, (n=4)	Focus Group + CIQ combined % for Group C, no duplicate cases	Total individual participants for the code (n=55)	Total % of study participants for the code
SF1	SCGTE	Community members who were committed, and relationships with Indivisible members kept participants involved	20	91%	20	91%	2	50%	2	50%	33	60%
SF2	SEE	Emotional engagement and passion for the work led to sustained involvement	18	82%	18	82%	0	0%	1	25%	25	45%
SF3	SCC	Increased or Critical Consciousness kept participants involved	16	73%	17	77%	1	25%	1	25%	23	42%
SF4	SSOD	Having a strong belief system, sense of duty, and conviction that it was not an option to quit	22	100%	22	100%	3	75%	3	75%	30	55%
SF5	SMNP	Participants stayed involved because they were motivated by the opposition	21	95%	21	95%	2	50%	3	75%	27	49%
SF6	SMDMP	Making a difference and thinking more was possible	19	86%	20	91%	2	50%	4	100%	37	67%
SF7	SFPM	Feeling like they had a purpose or meaning	11	50%	13	59%	2	50%	3	75%	20	36%
SF8	SICAW	Having their identity change to be aligned with the work	5	23%	10	45%	0	0%	0	0%	14	25%

Table of Sustained Involvement Factors by Participant Number (CIQ only)

Code/ Finding	SCGTE (SF1)	SEE (SF2)	SCC (SF3)	SSOD (SF4)	SMNP (SF5)	SMDMP (SF6)	SFPM (SF7)	SICAW (SF8)
Participant	Community	Emotional Engagement	Conscious- ness	Duty/ Value s	Opposition	More Possible	Purpose/ Meaning	Identity Aligned
1	x						x	
2								
3	x	x		x		x	x	
4						x		
5	x			x		x		
6	x					x		
7					x	x		
8								
9	x	x						
10						x		x
11			x		x	x	x	
12								
13								
14			x		x			
15	x							
16		x	x	x				
17	x			x		x		
18			x			x		x
19		x						
20	x	x				x		
21			x	x		x		x
22								
23	x							x
24								
25	x					x		
26	x	x				x		
27								
28								
29								

Table of Sustained Involvement Factors by Participant (Interview and Focus Group)

Code/ Finding	SCGTE (SF1)	SEE (SF2)	SCC (SF3)	SSOD (SF4)	SMNP (SF5)	SMDMP (SF6)	SFPM (SF7)	SICAW (SF8)
Participant	Community	Emotional Engagement	Conscious- ness	Duty/ Value s	Opposition	More Possible	Purpose/ Meaning	Identity Aligned
30	x	x		x	x	x		
31	x	x	x	x	x	x		
32	x		x	x	x	x	x	
33	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
34	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
35	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
36	x	x		x	x	x		x
37	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
38	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
39	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
40		x	x	x	x			
41	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
42	x	x		x	x	x	x	
43	x		x	x	x	x		
44		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
45	x	x	x	x	x	x		
46	x		x	x	x	x		x
47	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
48	x			x		x	x	x
49	x	x		x	x	x	x	
50	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
51	x	x	x	x	x		x	
52					x	x		
53		x		x	x	x	x	
54	x			x		x	x	
55	x		x	x	x	x	x	

Appendix M: Table of Sustained Involvement Sub-factors (SI) by Code and Method

Sustaining Involvement subfactor number	Code	Descriptor	CIQ total (n=55)	CIQ %	CIQ only participants (n=29)	CIQ only participants % (n=29)	CIQ total for Group B (n=22)	CIQ % for Group B (n=22)	CIQ total for Group C (n=4)	CIQ % for Group C (n=4)
SI1	SCON	Continue to be things a participant wants to be a part of or accomplish	5	9%	2	7%	2	9%	0	0%
SI2	SFA	Participants felt appreciated by group members, and received validation	8	15%	4	14%	3	14%	1	25%
SI3	SFLX	Indivisible's flexible format helped participants make it work for their interests and contexts	9	16%	3	10%	5	34%	1	25%
SI4	SSFF	Supportive family members and friends help participants stay involved	4	7%	2	7%	1	5%	1	25%
SI5	SMHAE	Motivated by hope, and elections (which create hope)	2	4%	0	0%	2	9%	0	0%
SI6	SREC	It helps to recognize they are one person among many, and they can't do everything.	7	13%	6	21%	1	5%	0	0%

Sustaining Involvement subfactor number	Code	Descriptor	Interview total (n=22)	Interview %	Interview + CIQ combined for Group B, no duplicate cases (n=22)	Interview + CIQ combined % for Group B, no duplicate cases	Focus Group Total (n=4)	Focus Group % for Group C (n=4)	Focus Group + CIQ combined for Group C, no duplicate cases, (n=4)	Focus Group + CIQ combined % for Group C, no duplicate cases	Total individual participants for the code (n=55)	Total % of study participants for the code
SI1	SCON	Continue to be things a participant wants to be a part of or accomplish	9	41%	10	45%	0	0%	1	25%	13	24%
SI2	SFA	Participants felt appreciated by group members, and received validation	4	18%	6	27%	1	25%	1	25%	12	22%
SI3	SFLX	Indivisible's flexible format helped participants make it work for their interests and contexts	12	55%	16	73%	3	75%	3	75%	22	40%
SI4	SSFF	Supportive family members and friends help participants stay involved	19	86%	19	86%	0	0%	1	25%	22	40%
SI5	SMHAE	Motivated by hope, and elections (which create hope)	8	36%	9	41%	1	25%	1	25%	10	18%
SI6	SREC	It helps to recognize they are one person among many, and they can't do everything.	10	45%	10	45%	1	25%	1	25%	17	31%
SI7	STTW	Taking breaks from the work and technology can help activists stay involved.	5	23%	6	27%	1	25%	2	50%	10	18%

Table of Sustained Involvement Sub-Factors by Participant (CIQ only participants)

Code/ Finding	SCON (SI1)	SFA (SI2)	SFLX (SI3)	SSFF (SI4)	SMHAE (SI5)	SREC (SI6)	STTW (SI7)
Participant	Future Goals	Appreciated	Flexible Format	Supportive Family	Hope + Elections	One Among Many	Taking Breaks
1							
2							
3		x		x			x
4							
5							
6						x	
7						x	
8			x				
9						x	
10		x				x	
11	x						
12						x	
13							
14							
15							
16				x			
17	x						
18							
19		x					
20			x			x	
21							
22							
23							
24							
25							
26							x
27							
28							
29			x				

Table of Sustained Involvement Sub-Factors by Participant (Interview and Focus Group)

Code/ Finding	SCON (SI1)	SFA (SI2)	SFLX (SI3)	SSFF (SI4)	SMHAE (SI5)	SREC (SI6)	STTW (SI7)
Participant	Future Goals	Appreciated	Flexible Format	Supportive Family	Hope + Elections	One Among Many	Taking Breaks
30				x			
31				x	x		
32				x		x	
33			x	x	x	x	
34				x	x	x	
35				x		x	
36		x		x			
37		x		x	x	x	
38				x		x	
39	x			x		x	
40							
41			x	x	x		
42	x	x	x	x			x
43	x	x	x	x			
44	x		x	x	x		x
45	x						x
46	x	x		x	x		
47	x					x	x
48	x			x	x		x
49	x			x			
50	x			x	x	x	
51		x		x		x	x
52							
53						x	
54	x	x					x
55			x	x	x		x

Appendix N: Table of Hindering Involvement Factors (HI) by Code and Method

Hindering Involvement number	Code	Descriptor	CIQ total (n=55)	CIQ %	CIQ only participants (n=29)	CIQ only participants % (n=29)	CIQ total for Group B (n=22)	CIQ % for Group B (n=22)	CIQ total for Group C (n=4)	CIQ % for Group C (n=4)
HI1	DBNT	Burnout, felt overwhelmed and duties exceeded energy or capacity	6	11%	3	10%	2	9%	1	25%
HI2	DGD	Group dynamics or issues with group members	9	16%	5	17%	4	18%	0	0%
HI3	DVA	Disagreement with values, approaches	12	22%	9	31%	6	27%	1	25%

Hindering Involvement number	Code	Descriptor	Interview total (n=22)	Interview %	Interview + CIQ combined for Group B, no duplicate cases (n=22)	Interview + CIQ combined % for Group B, no duplicate cases	Focus Group Total (n=4)	Focus Group % for Group C (n=4)	Focus Group + CIQ combined for Group C, no duplicate cases, (n=4)	Focus Group + CIQ combined % for Group C, no duplicate cases	Total individual participants for the code (n=55)	Total % of study participants for the code
HI1	DBNT	Burnout, felt overwhelmed and duties exceeded energy or capacity	13	59%	14	64%	3	75%	3	75%	20	36%
HI2	DGD	Group dynamics or issues with group members	5	23%	5	23%	1	25%	1	25%	11	20%
HI3	DVA	Disagreement with values, approaches	7	32%	10	45%	2	50%	3	75%	18	33%

Table of Hindered Involvement Factors by Participant (CIQ only participants)

Code/Finding	DBNT (HI1)	DGD (HI2)	DVA (HI3)
Participant	Burnout	Group Dynamics	Disagreement with Values
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			x
7	x	x	x
8			x
9	x		x
10		x	
11			x
12		x	
13			
14			
15			x
16			
17			x
18		x	x
19			
20			
21			
22			
23			
24	x		
25		x	x
26			
27			
28			
29			

Table of Hindered Involvement Factors by Participant (Interview and Focus Group)

Code/Finding	DBNT (HI1)	DGD (HI2)	DVA (HI3)
Participant	Burnout	Group Dynamics	Disagreement with Values
30	x		
31			
32			
33	x		
34	x		
35	x		x
36	x		x
37			
38	x		
39	x	x	x
40		x	x
41	x		x
42	x		x
43			
44			x
45	x	x	
46	x	x	x
47	x	x	x
48			
49			
50	x		
51	x		
52	x		x
53			x
54	x	x	
55	x		x

Appendix O: Table of Learning Findings (LF) by Code and Method

Learning Finding number (LF)	Code	Descriptor	CIQ total (n=55)	CIQ %	CIQ only participants (n=29)	CIQ only participants % (n=29)	CIQ total for Group B (n=22)	CIQ % for Group B (n=22)	CIQ total for Group C (n=4)	CIQ % for Group C (n=4)
LF1	LLHTP	Learning how to be an effective citizen and things get done in the public sphere	27	49%	15	52%	10	45%	2	50%
LF2	LACORG	Activism and how to organize	31	56%	16	55%	13	59%	2	50%
LF3	LCEV	Learning about health, social, political, education, and environmental issues	12	22%	5	17%	6	27%	1	25%
LF4	LCUPK	How to contribute and use prior knowledge in a new setting	9	16%	3	10%	4	18%	2	50%
LF5	LCOM	How to create community and work together	23	42%	9	31%	10	45%	4	100%
LF6	LIC	Increased consciousness	28	51%	14	48%	13	59%	1	25%
LF7	LLDPD	Leadership and Personal Development	23	42%	12	41%	8	36%	3	75%
LF8	LMCOC	Ventured out of comfort zone, and gained confidence	15	27%	7	24%	8	36%	0	0%
LF9	EMP	Becoming More Empowered	19	35%	11	38%	7	32%	1	25%
LF10	LASSV	Becoming More Assertive	15	27%	9	31%	6	27%	0	0
LF11	LBMP	Becoming More Political	20	36%	8	27%	12	55%	0	0

Learning Finding number (LF)	Code	Descriptor	Interview total (n=22)	Interview %	Interview + CIQ combined for Group B, no duplicate cases (n=22)	Interview + CIQ combined % for Group B, no duplicate cases	Focus Group Total (n=4)	Focus Group % for Group C (n=4)	Focus Group + CIQ combined for Group C, no duplicate cases, (n=4)	Focus Group + CIQ combined % for Group C, no duplicate cases	Total individual participants for the code (n=55)	Total % of study participants for the code
LF1	LLHTP	Learning how to be an effective citizen and things get done in the public sphere	20	91%	21	95%	2	50%	3	75%	39	71%
LF2	LACORG	Activism and how to organize	21	95%	21	95%	4	100%	4	100%	42	76%
LF3	LCEV	Learning about health, social, political, education, and environmental issues	15	68%	18	82%	2	50%	3	75%	26	47%
LF4	LCUPK	How to contribute and use prior knowledge in a new setting	19	86%	19	86%	3	75%	4	100%	25	45%
LF5	LCOM	How to create community and work together	18	82%	18	82%	3	75%	4	100%	31	56%
LF6	LIC	Increased consciousness	20	91%	21	95%	1	25%	2	50%	41	75%
LF7	LLDPD	Leadership and Personal Development	12	55%	14	64%	2	50%	3	75%	28	51%
LF8	LMCOC	Ventured out of comfort zone, and gained confidence	7	32%	10	45%	1	25%	1	25%	18	33%
LF9	EMP	Becoming More Empowered	12	55%	14	64%	1	25%	2	50%	27	49%
LF10	LASSV	Becoming More Assertive	13	59%	16	73%	0	0%	0	0%	25	45%
LF11	LBMP	Becoming More Political	12	55%	15	68%	0	0%	0	0%	23	42%

Table of Learning and Changes Findings by Participant (CIQ only participants)

Code/ Finding	LLHTP	LACORG	LCEV	LCUPK	LCOM	LIC	LLDPD	LMCOC	EMP	LASSV	LBMP
Participant	LF1	LF2	LF3	LF4	LF5	LF6	LF7	LF8	LF9	LF10	LF11
1	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	
2	x	x									
3		x			x		x		x		
4	x	x				x			x		
5	x	x				x	x		x		x
6	x		x	x	x			x	x	x	
7	x	x	x		x		x				x
8	x										x
9					x	x	x	x		x	x
10				x	x	x			x	x	x
11	x	x				x					
12						x		x	x	x	
13											
14	x					x					
15					x	x		x		x	
16	x	x			x	x	x			x	
17	x	x							x		x
18		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
19		x									
20		x			x		x				
21			x			x					
22		x					x				
23									x		x
24			x			x	x				
25	x					x	x				
26	x	x					x	x	x	x	
27	x	x									
28		x	x								x
29											

Table of Learning and Changes Findings by Participant (Interview and Focus Group)

Code/ Finding	LLHTP	LACORG	LCEV	LCUPK	LCOM	LIC	LLDPD	LMCOC	EMP	LASSV	LBMP
Participant	LF1	LF2	LF3	LF4	LF5	LF6	LF7	LF8	LF9	LF10	LF11
30	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
31	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x
32		x	x	x	x	x			x		
33	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
34	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x
35	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	
36	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
37	x	x		x	x	x	x				x
38	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
39	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x
40	x		x	x		x					x
41	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
42	x	x	x	x	x	x					x
43	x	x		x	x	x	x		x		
44	x	x	x			x		x	x	x	x
45	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x
46	x	x	x		x	x		x		x	
47	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
48	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
49	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x
50	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
51	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x
52	x	x	x	x	x				x		
53	x	x		x	x		x		x		
54		x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
55	x	x		x	x	x	x				

Appendix P: Table of Community Facilitators (CF) by Code and Method

Community Facilitators (CF) number	Code	Descriptor	CIQ total (n=55)	CIQ %	CIQ only participants (n=29)	CIQ only participants % (n=29)	CIQ total for Group B (n=22)	CIQ % for Group B (n=22)	CIQ total for Group C (n=4)	CIQ % for Group C (n=4)
CF1	ACRF	Community Relationships or Friendships	20	36%	11	38%	8	36%	1	25%
CF2	COLMP	Participants felt comfortable with like-minded people	36	65%	16	55%	17	77%	3	75%
CF3	PSFOG	Group members provided different kinds of support	29	53%	14	48%	13	59%	2	50%
CF4	ADGD	Group discussion and dialogue supported learning	14	25%	7	24%	4	18%	3	75%
CF5	CPFE	Place for everyone, no matter the scale or interest area	22	40%	9	31%	11	50%	2	50%
CF6	PILS	Participants learned from inspiring leadership in their community	14	25%	7	24%	5	23%	2	50%
CF7	AOCG	Opportunities with coalition groups facilitated learning or development	20	36%	10	34%	8	36%	2	50%
CF8	POGTKP	Participants gained access to politicians or public figures (work with them, learn from them, meet them)	13	24%	4	14%	7	32%	2	50%
CF9	ARES	Resources, Training, and Workshops supported learning	18	33%	11	38%	6	27%	1	25%

Community Facilitators (CF) number	Code	Descriptor	Interview total (n=22)	Interview %	Interview + CIQ combined for Group B, no duplicate cases (n=22)	Interview + CIQ combined % for Group B, no duplicate cases	Focus Group Total (n=4)	Focus Group % for Group C (n=4)	Focus Group + CIQ combined for Group C, no duplicate cases, (n=4)	Focus Group + CIQ combined % for Group C, no duplicate cases	Total individual participants for the code (n=55)	Total % of study participants for the code
CF1	ACRF	Community Relationships or Friendships	21	95%	21	95%	3	75%	3	75%	35	64%
CF2	COLMP	Participants felt comfortable with like-minded people	21	95%	22	100%	4	100%	4	100%	32	58%
CF3	PSFOG	Group members provided different kinds of support	16	73%	18	82%	3	75%	3	75%	35	64%
CF4	ADGD	Group discussion and dialogue supported learning	21	95%	21	95%	2	50%	3	75%	32	58%
CF5	CPFE	Place for everyone, no matter the scale or interest area	20	91%	21	95%	3	75%	3%	75%	33	60%
CF6	PILS	Participants learned from inspiring leadership in their community	10	45%	15	68%	1	25%	3	75%	25	45%
CF7	AOCG	Opportunities with coalition groups facilitated learning or development	19	86%	19	86%	4	100%	4	100%	33	60%
CF8	POGTKP	Participants gained access to politicians or public figures (work with them, learn from them, meet them)	12	55%	13	59%	1	25%	2	50%	21	38%
CF9	ARES	Resources, Training, and Workshops supported learning	14	64%	16	73%	3	75%	3	75%	30	55%

Table of Community Learning Facilitators by Participant (CIQ only participants)

Code/Finding	ACRF	COLMP	PSFOG	ADGD	CPFE	PILS	AOCG	POGTKP	ARES
Participant	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF5	CF6	CF7	CF8	CF9
1		x	x			x			
2									
3	x	x	x		x		x		x
4			x			x			x
5		x				x			x
6		x	x		x				
7		x	x		x				
8		x			x				
9	x	x							x
10	x	x			x		x		
11	x		x		x	x	x		
12									
13			x				x		x
14		x					x		x
15	x		x		x				
16	x		x		x				
17	x	x	x				x		
18	x	x					x	x	x
19		x							x
20		x	x		x	x	x		x
21	x	x							
22								x	
23	x		x	x			x		
24		x	x			x			x
25				x				x	
26	x	x	x			x			x
27									
28							x	x	
29									

Table of Community Learning Facilitators by Participant (Interview and Focus Group)

Code/Finding	ACRF	COLMP	PSFOG	ADGD	CPFE	PILS	AOCG	POGTKP	ARES
Participant	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF5	CF6	CF7	CF8	CF9
30	x	x	x		x	x	x		x
31	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
32	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
33	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
34	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
35	x	x	x		x	x	x		x
36	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
37	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	
38	x	x		x	x		x	x	
39	x	x	x		x		x		x
40		x		x					x
41	x	x		x	x	x			
42	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
43	x	x	x		x		x	x	
44	x	x			x	x	x		x
45	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
46	x	x	x	x	x		x		x
47	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
48	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
49	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
50	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
51	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
52	x	x		x	x	x	x		x
53		x	x			x	x		
54	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
55	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x

Appendix Q: Table of Community Impediments (CI) by Code and Method

Community Impediments (CI) number	Code	Descriptor	CIQ total (n=55)	CIQ %	CIQ only participants (n=29)	CIQ only participants % (n=29)	CIQ total for Group B (n=22)	CIQ % for Group B (n=22)	CIQ total for Group C (n=4)	CIQ % for Group C (n=4)
CI1	NWSE	Not working for the same end or goals	7	13%	2	7%	5	23%	0	0%
CI2	NEVB	Everyone is busy, limited bandwidth	6	11%	2	7%	2	9%	2	50%
CI3	NCOV	COVID-19 limited in-person meetings, group lost momentum, social isolation from group	6	11%	3	10%	1	5%	2	50%

Community Impediments (CI) number	Code	Descriptor	Interview total (n=22)	Interview %	Interview + CIQ combined for Group B, no duplicate cases (n=22)	Interview + CIQ combined % for Group B, no duplicate cases
CI1	NWSE	Not working for the same end or goals	7	32%	9	41%
CI2	NEVB	Everyone is busy, limited bandwidth	10	45%	12	55%
CI3	NCOV	COVID-19 limited in-person meetings, group lost momentum, social isolation from group	7	32%	7	32%

Table of Community Impediments by Participant (CIQ only participants)

Code/Finding	NWSE	NEVB	NCOV
Participant	CI1	CI2	CI3
1			x
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7	x		
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			
23		x	x
24			
25	x	x	
26			x
27			
28			
29			

Table of Community Impediments by Participant (Interview and Focus Group)

Code/Finding	NWSE	NEVB	NCOV
Participant	CI1	CI2	CI3
30			
31		x	
32		x	x
33		x	
34			x
35			
36			x
37			x
38	x	x	
39	x		
40	x	x	
41	x	x	
42	x	x	
43			
44	x		
45	x	x	
46		x	x
47	x		x
48			
49		x	x
50		x	x
51	x	x	
52		x	x
53			
54	x	x	x
55			

Appendix R: Sample Quotes from the Research

This section includes additional quote examples for the thematic codes, so that the reader can hear more directly from the study participants. The researcher has stripped the names of specific chapters, or very small groups. If someone referenced a group like the ACLU, that would be included, but if it is a niche group only in one town, this was removed.

Factors for Sustained Involvement Code Examples

SCGTE: Community members committed and relationships, giving time and support to staying involved (SF1)

“It's definitely lovely being in a group of people who are like-minded and really committed to making things better. So that sense of community is nice. And you know, I've never been involved in organized religion. And, you know, I admired friends who went to synagogue and I would go with them. There's this whole community there which I never really had. So I liked being with these people. I respect them and enjoy them.”

-Participant 49 (Interview)

SEE: Emotional engagement and passion led to sustained involvement (SF2)

“We wept and embraced each other. While we didn't know each other very well at that time, our friendship deepened and they became active and pivotal members of our Indivisible chapter. We were connected in our grief on that day but we remained connected through our commitment to battle against Trump and everything he stood for. Moreover, as women we shared a particularly painful response to Clinton's defeat and the ascendancy of such a despicable misogynist.”

-Participant 53 (Focus group)

“I learned that to get more people engaged you have to do many things including; holding regular events that people can count on, reaching out to individuals in a variety of ways to encourage engagement, to make events fun in creative ways, to follow up on events with reports of outcome of the event and to find people to help with the event. I learned some of this from experience and some from training sessions with Indivisible National. I had a whole host of feelings about organizing these events: I was nervous that no one would show up, I was determined to make positive change, I needed an antidote to despair, I was gratified by people's participation and feedback and proud of what was accomplished including sending 20,000 postcards in 2020!

-Participant 26 (CIQ)

SCC: Critical Consciousness (SF3)

“I think it was a tremendous experience and I had one vision of how I would feel about these people before I got there and then a completely different one. Well not completely different, but somewhat different. It was more nuanced than I imagined. And then spending time in Tijuana. Holy cow. The entire world needs to go to that city. And it's been going on for years or three

years, right? We were there in January 2020. I was so horrified the first time I came home and told my family, my daughter and one of her friends and my husband actually went to San Diego the second time. I think you can't - it's hard to imagine just how desperate these families are. The shelter I worked in was for families. So I worked with families in San Diego, and it's a wonderful shelter if you ever get to San Diego. I recommend you go to the [redacted] shelter. They do a wonderful job, they're respectful. They're kind, they try to get people to the next step here."

-Participant 31 (Interview)

[Researcher Note: This quote is part of a larger discussion of the participant's involvement with border work. This wasn't an Indivisible project, but she became involved in it after joining Indivisible, and volunteered at both the shelter, as well as being present at court hearings).

SSOD: Participants stayed involved because of a sense of duty and values; it was not an option to quit. (SF4)

"Working with the like-minded individuals of our Indivisible group, I have seen no major change in my core values but have actually reaffirmed and strengthened my commitment to supporting and fighting for just causes."

-Participant 35 (CIQ)

"I think with the Republican Party dissolving and being so countercultural to where my values were, raised as a Catholic, as a Catholic, educated woman, as a Christian, as an American. Those are the values I was raised on. My dad was a veteran of World War Two, and then I'm confronted with the antithesis of what I was raised on. So I think they haven't changed, that they've only deepened and probably maybe dug my heels in more to say, No, you're not taking this away from us. This is who we are as Americans."

-Participant 34 (Interview)

[Researcher note: Participant 34 mentioned previous experience teaching in a convent, and how she sought out politicians who had aligned values].

"No, you don't stop. You keep on going, and then you don't have time to think about any kind of shut offs."

-Participant 32 (Interview)

[Researcher note: Quitting was not on the table for this participant, she thought it was the right thing to do, and stopping was not an option].

**SMNP: Motivated by the opposition, both negative politicians and negative policies
Participants stayed involved because they were motivated by the opposition. (SF5)**

"I guess I never knew how much I love this country and our democracy until Trump started to dismantle it and treat it so carelessly. And Trump was a real motivator. And then, and then to tie that in with the group support. So those two things, I think, kind of kept me focused."

-Participant 46, Interview

"I did the most texting I have ever done. I mean, I must have put in, I tried to calculate it, I think 100 to 150 hours I put in doing texting. And it was just so exciting. It was so exciting because we

knew that we could not have another four years of Trump, and that was the motivation for that election.”

-Participant 44, Interview

“I was absolutely convinced that Trump would destroy American democracy if he could. I never thought he would accept the negative electoral result. I never thought for an instant that that was a possibility. I don't quite know how he would try to defeat it. You know, whether I thought that might just have to drag him out by military force. I didn't quite anticipate the insurrection. But I kind of did once he started calling out the proud boys but, you know, I just thought of the permanent threat, and of the American democracy being threatened here. I also think Trump is basically a Russian agent. I don't mean that necessarily. I can't tell him what this arrangement is. You know whether it's formal, but I kind of doubt it. He has longstanding ties to the Russian mafia as people in New York know, and his biographers mentioned, and he's been bailed out by Russian money coming from the oligarchs. I think he feels an obligation to these folks. And he clearly admires Putin. I think he's an ally of Putin. Just period and, and he would destroy American democracy on Putin's behalf if he could to weaken the country. So I consider the situation that, that was one big motivation.”

-Participant 51, Interview

SMDMP: Making a difference and thinking more was possible (SF6)

“And the other thing too I would say is that our local group has never had any issue raising money for projects, and for things that we present to our membership. We have never been held back because we haven't been able to raise the money for whatever project we've tried to do. And, and so I think that also is a testimony to the fact that we do have influence in our local community here, of people who recognize the work that we're doing here and are supportive of it. And [redacted] was working with DACA kids, and we raised tons of money for them, and have, you know, supported, you know, their renewals over the years. That's amazing. I mean, I could go on and on about all of the things that [redacted] Indivisible has done, you know, in our local community raising money for different organizations and different groups to help the wellbeing of our community, that have been supported through and through by our local community of Indivisible members. And so all of those things add up to you know, the work that we're doing here feels meaningful. And, we're a force to be reckoned with here. Don't sleep on [redacted] Indivisible, we're a force to be reckoned with here and everybody here conservatives, independents, moderate old people, young people, they all know who we are... We're working really hard here, and the results of this election, we just swept the mega ticket here. Yeah. And it was close. You know, we had to work really, really hard. And there's no doubt in my mind that without the presence of Indivisible here [redacted], that does not happen.”

-Participant 37 (in interview)

[Researcher note: This participant went on to discuss other goals they had for their chapter, and how their past success led to his belief that they would go on to accomplish more].

SFPM: Feeling like I had a purpose or Meaning (SF7)

“After the leak came out about Roe v. Wade, we had a rally. And we've never had 200 people show up, but two hundred some people showed up, and really encouragingly, they were mostly young people, and a bunch of old folks. I got to remember what it was like not to be in a space where abortion was legal. A lot of people were saying hey, we want this and it told me that yes, there is a reason to do this. And that's what I'm living on right now. So thank you.”

-Participant 54 (Focus group)

“Engaging with Indivisible broadened my knowledge as a voter and I also felt a purpose in doing what I could to help our state and elect good candidates for the well-being of all in [redacted state].”

-Participant 34 (CIQ)

“There was a person who would set up a small table and have like, three by five cards for us to fill out about something you know, that was currently happening, and they would bring it to Senator [redacted]'s office and handed to you know, the secretaries of the people that were there. She also started, they gave us name tags to start wearing permanently. So it was kind of, you know, I could feel that they were getting organized and getting to know us. And again, it was a lot of the same people week after week, and I got to know them well. I really liked them, like the camaraderie and also the common purpose.”

-Participant 46 (Interview)

SICAW: Having my identity change to be aligned with the work (SF8)

“And we had a town hall with Governor [redacted] of [redacted], and I was the basically the emcee person. It was on Zoom, and it was my job to ask him all the questions, and interact with him and all that stuff. And it was so interesting to me that it was just another day. You know, I didn't want to be nervous about it. I wasn't worried about how it was going to play. I just did it. And, you know, the idea that I would just, you know, back in 2017, to think that I would within a few years be sitting there, basically interviewing the Governor of [redacted] was beyond anything that I would have ever expected to be doing. But being in this group and getting involved has taught me that all of these people are just people. You know, they're just you know... I've talked to [redacted] and [redacted] and all these other people like the Secretary of State. And, you know, and I'm like, Well, they're no different than us. And so there's no reason to be intimidated. There's no reason to be shy. They're used to they're used to people asking them questions. That's their whole job almost, to answer other people's questions? And so it's just, it's been an interesting transition for me to kind of gain that confidence. Because I had never thought of myself as an activist. I never thought of myself as somebody who could help make change. And yet here I am. It's small. It's very incremental, but it matters.”

-Participant 33 (Interview)

Sustained Involvement Sub-Factors

SCON: It helps when participants have goals, and more things they want to be a part of or accomplish. (SI1)

“But, and I've had people in the group say, you know, why are you thinking about it on that scale? Because, like, what are the things that we could do, that we could affect? My answer is, and has been, that we should be guided by the task, and what actually needs to be accomplished, not by what we think we can do...

It's very much the same thing that, like Sunrise Movement will save our climate. You know, they'll say, Well, look, we're going to talk about what we're being told is the threshold beyond which we cannot go. And so that's our goal. And then the other stuff is made up, you know, we're building other things to say that will help us get to that goal. If it doesn't help us get to that goal, then it's not good enough. And that's pretty much always been my approach. It's just my idea of what it would take together continues to evolve. That's kind of the wrapper for, for this is, it's you know you're learning, but you're trying to do things that are basically, they're really hard to do. It might be impossible, but you're still trying to do them anyway. It's a weird context.

Because a lot of things you could do them, or you could master you know anyway, well, this is great. We had a policy, or something, but we - Indivisible as a whole - does that, and as a small group, you know, we can only try to contribute to it. But I continue to feel that it's really important for us to still be mindful of what we're trying to do, which for me at this point, is... our initial, you know, tagline was basically resisting the Trump agenda. That's what we're doing is we're resisting his agenda, but the agenda, obviously is bigger than just him. And it doesn't really say what we're for. And I prefer to talk about it, as I have the exact language like in front of me right now, but basically trying to build and protect a multilingual, multicultural, multiracial, pluralistic democracy, you know, one that actually serves everybody with a focus on justice and inclusivity and sustainability. So that's a really broad call. I mean, you're never going to get there, right? You're just trying to get closer to there than you are right now. And in particular, stop as much harm as we can.”

-Participant 38 (Interview)

“So the next year, what that looks like is I made a lot of friends during campaign season in the state legislature. I'm in both houses, and I told them then, and I even said to [redacted's] people, I'm going to come ask for favors. We knocked on doors for you. We helped your campaigns. I'm going to need you to help [redacted school district] and so I'm going to call in some favors. I've already talked to people in both the Senate and the House. We have something called the aggregate spending limit for our public schools. I need them to blow that thing up and throw it in the trash, because we need to over fund [redacted] schools. They've been decimating schools apparently for years, because I was ready for college decades ago. But somebody's child that went to school with me was not, so we can't just fully fund, we're going to have to overfund schools, and the only way to do that is blow up that aggregate spending limit. So I tell them, I'm gonna be in your offices. I'm going to be calling you. I'm going to be you know, I'm going to bug you and just to get me to shut up, you're going to get rid of it. And you're going to get a coalition to get rid of it. It has to happen. So that's what I'm going to do.”

-Participant (30)

[Researcher Note: This participant had a series of things that she wanted to accomplish over the next year, and this kept her very engaged with the work].

SFA: Participants liked feeling appreciated, and receiving validation. (SI2)

“I think I have avoided burnout for six years, because I've become over time very clear at what I do well. And what I do well is my communication with the group. It's one of my gifts. I can write well and I can think well, so what I write is helpful to them because it clarifies things that were not clear. So that is, I know that's an enormous strength, and it's not a common one. And I get so much affirmation back from it that keeps you going. When people tell you how much they value what you're doing it gives you energy to keep on going.”

-Participant 36 (Interview)

“Each of the Indivisible groups that I have been a part of has made me feel valued and we have developed close relationships whereby we can support and call upon each other when necessary and they show up.”

-Participant 30 (CIQ)

“Someone remembered that I had turned in a lot of postcards! Felt appreciated. Signing postcards and handing them in.”

-Participant 19 (CIQ)

“I feel like my contributions and what I've been able to do, you know, for the local community here and for this group... I feel like that is, I feel validated in that I feel like it's seen. And so you know, all I can do is wake up in the morning and do the best I can today, and that's really all you can ask of anybody.”

-Participant 37 (Interview)

SFLX: Indivisible's flexible format helps participants to work for their interests and contexts (SI3)

“There's that 400 person group and they still are going strong as far as I know. I don't go because it's too much, but they're pretty effectively organized. I think they have all these little subgroups, and I'm on their email list and I get all their emails. So they're good. And our group is good too. And leadership is again, flexible with us. It's based on who wants to do it. Like who's gonna step up and actually, whatever it is, like who's gonna order the postcards, and who's gonna go get the labels, and who's gonna distribute things”

-Participant 31 (Interview)

SSFF: Supportive family members and friends help participants stay involved. (SI4)

“My best friend is super supportive of activism. And, in fact, this guy is a profoundly smart strategist. And we're always talking about saving the country and what the Democrats ought to be doing.”

-Participant 51 (Interview)

“Oh my gosh, yes. Yeah. My family is very supportive. And my friends are fabulous about it.”

-Participant 36 (Interview)

“My family, yeah. My friends for sure. My friends are activists. Yeah, like my entire friend group has kind of changed in the last six years.”

-Participant 41 (Interview)

“Definitely, definitely. My immediate family, I have my husband and my two sons have been very supportive and especially one of my sons, he's a teacher, and he actually ran for Board of Ed. I think I've had a lot of impact on him. He's definitely interested in political, you know, life, maybe in the future. And, you know, I've made them very knowledgeable, I keep them up on everything. I make sure they vote when my son went away to college. I mean, he got his absentee ballot. You know, they call me for advice on friends who need to register or whatever. So, I've made them very aware and they're supportive of what I do. Thank goodness. And friends are too, you know, I try to get my friends that are not activists to be more involved. You know, some do, some don't. That's okay. At least like, you know, get them out to vote and get them to sign my petitions and all that.”

-Participant 48 (Interview)

SMHAE: Hope helped participants stay involved, and elections (which create hope). (SI5)

“It's an ongoing challenge to make us viable here. But every election we have more and more hope. And I'm anxious to see when [redacted politician] gets in there, and he could spew out those numbers. I'd like to see [redacted] numbers to see if we push the boat any, and if our efforts really helped... what keeps me going is because I saw in this midterm, we made a difference. That's, that's, that keeps me going. We made a difference. It was all worth it. The two years of work. It was worth it because we saved our country for at least two more years.”

-Participant 34 (Interview)

“And we were out there and we had a lot of camaraderie among texters and everything, and we'd share neat stories of someone that we texted with or whatever. And I mean, there were so many of them that were saying thank you for what you're doing. Thank you for what you do. When you first send it out, you're sending out say, 1000 text messages, and they just go to random people's phones... And then at the end they'll say, Yeah, I'm going out to vote on whatever, Sunday or Monday and I'm bringing my family members. Some of the groups you can modify the text. There's a canned response for Yes, just click yes and it can respond. But if you get a really neat response, you can type in there. Oh, that's so exciting! Thank you for being a voter, and thank you for bringing your friends and family along. That's awesome. You know, and you can add a little bit of personal touch to it. And they enjoy that, you know, I'm sure.”

-Participant 44 (Interview)

[Researcher note: This participant talked about how she felt hope through her texting work with voters and potential voters leading up to the election. Due to the number of redactions, this is an excerpt].

SREC: It helps to recognize they are one person among many, and every bit counts. (SI6)

“Within Indivisible, we looked for themes for our monthly general meetings that are opportunities for engagement, because we knew that the endpoint was going to be, you know, the November election. And we wanted to present to the membership, people and organizations that were working towards that purpose, you know, be it in petitions, be it with voter registration, voting, you know, volunteering for candidates, etc.

So now my thinking is for next year, the theme should be it takes a village, because translating that effort to what next has to happen will require everybody. And people think that their actions are small, but their actions together, they form a critical mass that brings change, you know. So that's the kind of thing that I want to bring to the group.”

-Participant 35 (Interview)

“So desperately what I try and do is... just try and get up and do the best I can today with whatever we're presented with today. And so, some days my best is gonna look better than other days. But at the end of the day, I'm a volunteer, you know, at the end of the day, I'm one person who's just doing the thing that I know I can do. And I trust that that work, you know, is felt, and I get feedback all the time that it is and so, I feel like I'm, I feel like I'm where I need to be in this moment here. And so overall, I feel pretty good about that. And I think that that is kind of a buffer against the exhaustion, is that the two things when I look at, I'm doing what I can do, and when I look at the people who I emulate and the things that they did, you know what I'm doing is easy. So so on the balance, overall, you know, there isn't burnout, because there's that perspective.”

-Participant 37 (Interview)

STTW: Taking breaks from the work and technology can help activists stay involved. (SI7)

“I physically go away. And this summer we were in Europe for [redacted], and that was the healthiest thing, and really allowed me to come back and have a little bit more perspective, and we're going away in January again. You know, that is one. I also go to a personal trainer twice a week, and that is the physical aspect. The other thing is we are very lucky. This town has wonderful trails, [redacted] lakes and whatever. So outdoors is a great way to just decompress, just taking a long walk on one of the trails or something like that. So that's helpful.”

-Participant 35 (Interview)

“The main thing I do is physical exercise. So I'm a swimmer and I walk a lot. Those are the main two things.”

-Participant 45 (Interview)

“So you definitely have to take time and take your trips or whatever, read a book and just make sure you take care of yourself for sure. And like, you know, now I'm kind of like, I still think about it. I attended a democratic meeting last night, but I also played tennis. I'm very serious about that. So I take a clinic. I have some games, and I really make sure I carve out that time. It's really important. It's just as important as the political work and, you know, my money making

work, you know, so I can't go to meetings on a Tuesday night when I have my tennis clinic. I just won't give it up, you know?"

-Participant 48 (Interview)

Hindered Involvement Code Examples

DBNT: Burnout hindered involvement (HI1)

"I mean, every time we go away on a trip, I say to my husband, when I get back, I have to step away because this is killing me. And then I don't, and that's true. That's true. And, you know, after Biden got elected, we thought we're going to take a break, and then things went completely, absolutely ballistic down in [redacted]. You know, in terms of voter rights. And now after these elections, you kind of thing, but a lot has remained the same. Every time I read something about another court deciding on DACA against DACA, then you know, it's just never ending, and that's only one of the issues that brings me back. And I still have to find a balance, because it really is... I participated very intensively in the [redacted] redistricting process. And I was horrid every day after I was going through that process on Zoom the next day, and for days to come. I was nasty to everybody, because I was so furious for not being able to do more. And so that is not healthy. But making a difference in these young people's lives makes it all worthwhile."

-Participant 35 (Interview)

[Researcher note: Participant 35 continued to be involved, but mentioned periods of burnout)

"Because I've been doing this for six years and I'm just done. And so we're having a steering committee meeting in two to three weeks, and I'm hoping to find somebody else who is interested in stepping into leadership. The problem is that I've done the communication really well, and it's something that very few people are comfortable with, and it may not be their strong gift. Some might be willing to run a meeting, but the communication piece is kind of a sticking point. So I have not said I'm not going to do anything. I announced my stepping back at our November meeting 10 days ago, and I've since written three emails. So clearly, I'm not gone yet... And I think being away really told me, you know you've been doing this six years. You've done it enough. You don't need to continue doing this."

-Participant 36 (Interview)

[Participant 36 indicated they wanted to keep interacting with their core group, but was also feeling burnt out].

DGD: Group dynamics or issues with group members could hurt involvement (HI2)

"I felt disconnected when our original organizing group fell apart. One of the original organizers was too patriarchal in his attitude and it just began to be a chronic annoyance to me. We had a big meeting... He asked me to be his flip chart scribe, even though I really didn't want to do it. I disagreed with him while being a scribe and almost got booed for it... I was disappointed that I didn't have the skills to smooth over situations and was disappointed in myself for [redacted] in front of a large group of people."

-Participant 7 (CIQ)

“Early on in Indivisible there was a jockeying of who was in charge and what the rules were. There were some real power trips going on. Before I retired at 55 I ran two small successful companies; I did not want to be in charge. I am someone who needs organization so I volunteered to do the work needed for organization. This threatened some people. I felt frustrated and had to learn how to reassure the leaders I did not want their position, I just wanted us to be successful at reaching our shared goals.”

-Participant 10 (CIQ)

DVA: Disagreement with values or approaches could hurt involvement (HI3)

“Disconnected when I thought some of the activities were a bit corny. Some people sent valentines to Congressman [redacted], with little sayings on them, to the effect of meet with constituents. I thought that was a waste of time. I think that I was frustrated that others didn’t agree.”

-Participant 6 (CIQ)

“After the 2020 election and Biden taking office, there was a lack of focus in Indivisible. Took some time to figure out how to proceed and what our new focus should be.”

-Participant 8 (CIQ)

LLHTP: Learning how to be an effective citizen and get things done in the public sphere (LF1)

“I learned how to organize a protest at a town hall. I also learned how to lobby with our state government thanks not to Indivisible but to Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense Laws, which I also joined. In addition, I participated in an equity and inclusion working group with our city council and as a result, I currently participate in our Police Chief’s Community Advisory Committee.”

-Participant 28 (CIQ)

[Researcher note: This is an example of additional learning that occurred when participants engaged in additional social action or civic engagement works outside of Indivisible. 69% of study participants became involved in other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.]

“I learned that [redacted SW state] has a program called [redacted] where we can voice our opinions with a thumbs up or down or speak out about a bill pending before the state legislature without having to call or email my representatives...I learned writing legislators in Congress in other states is a waste of time since they do not represent me. Indivisible’s guide taught me that and to only write office holders that do represent me.”

-Participant 4 (CIQ)

“I learned how the local democratic committee picked candidates and the process of getting candidates on the ballot.”

-Participant 31 (CIQ)

LACORG: Learning about Activism and How to Organize (LF2)

“Before Trump's election in 2016, I knew very little about the political world: how it was organized, how the election process worked, etc. I didn't even know who my Congressional rep was! Through helping to start a group (which became part of Indivisible), I learned the importance of working through Congress to make change. In early 2016... I THOUGHT I'd have a quiet retirement...but then Trump was elected. A friend that I had just met... approached me, saying he thought I had a lot of connections in the small town in which we live...and that we needed to do something in reaction to Trump winning. I invited about six other people to a conversation...out of which we invited about 30 people to have a broader conversation...and that led to us having a community meeting at which 150 people showed up. And THAT has evolved into a group with a distribution list of 500 people...a weekly newsletter to them...monthly meetings to share information and to activate grass roots. AND THAT group helped mobilize a cross district group of representatives from as many grassroots groups that we could find in the Congressional district to form what we called [redacted] with the aim of flipping our district to BLUE. And in 2018, we did!”

-Participant 17 (in CIQ)

“I took on the leadership of our local group, Indivisible [redacted]. It connected me with people who were as angry and passionate as I was about the Trump presidency. Together, we went to the first Women's March in [redacted]. We shared a common goal as we worked together in the 2018, 2020, and 2022 elections. We watched in horror as the cruelty, racism, and hatred manifested in the Trump administration... I began to organize rallies. I held many rallies organized nationally through MoveOn.org and other groups. I held local Women's Marches. And lots of people showed up. Politicians showed up. The press showed up. I'm still doing it, most recently for gun safety and a Women's March in October around women's health issues... I don't think I would have become this type of organizer in my community if I hadn't started first with our local Indivisible group.”

-Participant 20 (CIQ)

“Prior to Indivisible, I had no idea of the importance of door to door canvassing. I had not canvassed in the past in any meaningful way. I joined Indivisible, quickly became a leader, and facilitated the group's membership in a larger Indivisible grouping [redacted]. Through that connection I met and was mentored by experienced activists who strongly advocated for door to door canvassing.

I was not convinced but willing to try. I organized a canvass in my community, attracted a number of people, brought in a trainer then jumped in and got started. I was impressed by 1) how receptive people were to talking at the door; 2) the extent to which those conversations seemed to genuinely result in people becoming more engaged; 3) how much I learned about the people living in my community; 4) how quickly I became comfortable with introducing myself to strangers and striking upon a conversation; 4) how easily I could shrug off negative encounters. I began volunteering for canvassing in other, larger communities and ended up helping run a large canvassing effort for [redacted]’s

campaign...and we flipped [redacted] from red to blue! This was the beginning of my learning how to be an activist and the dawning of a recognition that it really does happen one person at a time.”

-Participant 18 (in CIQ)

LCEV Learning about health, social, political, education, and environmental issues (LF3)

“I’ve learned little more about how laws get passed, and how the budget gets made [redacted]. I learned a little bit about MailChimp. I have to learn more about it. I learned you know some subject matter stuff like Medicare Advantage, and the other plans are really rigged against providing care. Providing care is not their priority, making money is their priority. So I learned that there are some issues, and there is a need for the [redacted] Health Act...The head of our health committee keeps on top of all the things that we should be thinking about. And then in the meetings, people might say, alright, I’ll look into this thing or that thing or so she’s instrumental in some ways, and just sparking interest in learning more about particular areas of health.”

-Participant 49 (Interview)

LCUPK: How to contribute and use prior knowledge in a new setting (LF4)

“And so it was a [redacted] radio show that I took over for a friend, who moved out of town, and so I interviewed people for that. So I was kind of used to that format of approaching people and you know, asking them questions... And I think what really matters is, you know, how much do you care about what you’re responding to? And, you know, what skills can you bring to it? I didn’t follow anybody’s footsteps except my own. I already knew how to write. I like writing. I like communicating with people and that was already comfortable interviewing people or being in a conversation with somebody... So just touching on that kind of, you know, checkered past. I think the other thing in the facilitation work is that I do work across sectors - for profit, not-for-profit. So I think that’s the other piece of this, is that I you know, marinate in other people’s strategy conversations for years and years and years. So I have a kind of shallow but very broad view of an inside view of lots of different kinds of puzzles. insight. You have lots of different kind of puzzles.”

-Participant 38 (Interview)

[Researcher note: Throughout the interview, Participant 38 was able to articulate ways that his prior experience translated to his work with Indivisible]

LCOM: How to create community and work together (LF5)

“Yeah, even within [Indivisible] Indivisible, we are very flat in that sense. And we want to actually encourage that more. In our general meeting in December, we have it the first Thursday of every month, we are going to try to elicit more ideas for 2023 from the people there. Because we have a structure, what we have is called a steering committee, and we kind of generate things throughout the year. But we want more and more, and sometimes people come with ideas through Facebook or whatever, but with [redacted] she’s very open and she’s very supportive.”

-Participant 35 (Interview)

“But what has been even better are the relationships we have developed with other Indivisible groups. We work closely with groups in more suburban areas. We have found people with strengths we may not have so we all work together on efforts, as needed. It has been an amazing experience to work with people all over [redacted] on important initiatives.”

-Participant 33 (CIQ)

“We only knew each other vaguely, but have spent the last five-plus years doing this work together, speaking almost every single day. We have become very close, bonded by the work we do together. And one of the remarkable things that has occurred as a result of our efforts is that our group has brought together people who might otherwise not know each other, and made them feel a sense of responsibility toward each other. Solidarity creates a kind of community.”

-Participant 50 (CIQ)

LIC: Increased consciousness (LF6)

“Like many in Indivisible, I would classify my political activity pre-2016 as mostly a news junkie and an occasional political donation to a candidate. After 45 was elected, it hit me like a ton of bricks that my passive bystander approach was really part of the problem...”

-Participant 55 (CIQ)

LLDPD: Leadership and Personal Development (LF7)

“I am not a very assertive person, but I started out slowly, dipping my feet in a little at a time. As I met more like-minded people and learned more about becoming politically active, I started to feel more comfortable and jumped in more and more. I started to volunteer for political campaigns and causes that were important to me. I am now very active in local campaigns every year...I can say I've definitely developed leadership skills I didn't have confidence in before. When I joined, this committee was pretty stagnant -- many members had been there for a long time just kind of calling it in. In the last several years, I've worked to recruit new members who reflect the diversity of [redacted] and also align with more progressive values.”

-Participant 48 (Interview)

“While I was leading a big meeting for the first time, I learned that when you are in this position, you have to take charge of the meeting (or someone has to) or it will go haywire. I remember thinking I should just let people talk and express themselves, and that one thing would lead to another, and it would be amazing! But I found out that what often happens is that it can devolve into either arguing or one person just talking the entire time to hear themselves talk. It was at that meeting that I realized it was important to be a firm facilitator. To take charge, if that is your role, and to make sure that you get to at least some things on your agenda. It was an a-ha moment in the sense that I realized that I was capable of being that facilitator, and that I could be good at it. and that it was also good to make a plan so that you aren't just floundering. It was definitely the start of additional learning. Learning to be a leader, which has involved a LOT of learning. Learning how to identify people's strengths and weaknesses in a group so that you can draw on them. Learning how to invite people in to engage in a group. Learning to speak in public.” -Participant 16 (CIQ)

LMCOC: Participants ventured out of their comfort zone and gained confidence (LF8)

“I am an introvert, through and through. It's always been hard for me to talk to people, much less ask them to do something. This can cause me quite a bit of anxiety, which is always something we all prefer to avoid. I've gotten better at that, and even enjoy it. It's happened slowly over these last few years. I dealt with that by reminding myself of my commitment to this work. My steering committee is supportive and "always there for me", and so I always try to do my best for them.”

-Participant 54 (CIQ)

“I am very introverted and never aspired to leadership. But no one else was doing anything so I stepped up. I have learned so much about building participatory organizations, how to motivate people, how to get things done. I now feel comfortable taking charge in new situations if needed- although I prefer not to have to. I was fortunate in that we have a truly amazing group of people.”

-Participant 47 (CIQ)

EMP: Becoming More Empowered, Empowerment (LF9)

“The learning was virtual. I felt empowered to be an active participant in [redacted]... The guidance was simple and easy to grasp and the tips were very successful when put to use. Looking back, I feel fortunate to have this knowledge and experience.”

-Participant 30 (CIQ)

“I guess I would say that it's been one of the most important experiences of my life. It's changed my understanding of what I'm personally capable of as a human being. I also feel very strongly that this was like a genuine crisis that we all lived through. And I feel proud that the group that we were in played a very small part in doing something about that crisis...”

Yeah, I think that at the outset, I just was too freaked out to even worry about what my capabilities were. It just was needed. I needed to do something and then over time, I think both myself and [redacted], my, my partner in this, we realized that we were actually kind of succeeding at doing things and that was very surprising. You know, so we raised like, you know. We had this fundraiser for [redacted] refugees like in mid-2017, I would say, so early in the process, and we raised more than \$30,000, and I didn't think that that was something that we could do. And then we got really invested in the midterms and like, you know, again, like as I tell people in our group, there's no guarantee that your work is going to pay off. But as it happened, we got invested in a race that did not seem like it was gonna go Democrats' way. And then we won. And so I think at some point, we sort of realized, okay, we can actually do stuff and that the things that we do can have some small impact on the larger picture, and that felt like a really powerful thing to realize, you know. At the outset, like I was saying before, every picture was okay, we have to have, you know, 50,000 people to accomplish anything, like anything less is just going to be a waste. And over time, I think I realized that like no, if you just have 10 people who are willing to do absolutely everything, like that can be enough sometimes. And so it

was good to use the word empowering, even though I don't like that word. You know, it made me realize that we had strength that I hadn't initially appreciated.”

-Participant 50 (interview)

LASSV Becoming More Assertive (LF10)

“Absolutely. I actually, and I brought this to one of our Indivisible meetings, something somebody said on Twitter. It was just a regular person. It wasn't a group, but she started a story about how she started wearing a sign and I can't remember what the saying was. But it was about protecting Social Security, on like a button. And she wore it everywhere. And the reason she did it was because then when she was standing in line at the grocery store, people would start talking to her about her button so she got to say to them, Hey, you know, Senator Scott, the guy in Johnson, Wisconsin. They want to put limits on Social Security. They want to cut Social Security. They want to raise the age to 75, they want to cut you off at 90. And she said, You know, I wear this button everywhere, because it's a non-threatening way to start a conversation about Social Security.

And I didn't have a Social Security button but it gave me the idea and so like, I had a hair appointment. I went to get my hair cut, and the young woman that cuts my hair. I suspect she's a [redacted, Trump fan]... So she was cutting my hair, and she has been cutting my hair for years... And I don't even know how the election came up. But it came up like, Oh, here's my chance. So I said, Yeah, so did you hear that they want to cut Social Security. She stopped cutting my hair, and she said no, they can't do that. And I was like, Oh yeah, yeah, they can and they're going to. Please go to these guys' websites. They're suggesting that they raise the retirement age to 75. And I know her mom is not well and I think on Social Security, nowhere near 75.

And she said, Well, they can't do that. And I said, yeah, yeah, yes, they can. And I please, please go check it out. Please. They want to raise the age and by the way, they're going to cut people off at 90. So if your mom lives past 90, I guess she's going to come live with you. And she said no. And I was like, yes, please go. Do you know what I mean? And I thought well, I wouldn't have done that prior to reading this woman's story. So now I'm kind of on the lookout for a Social Security button so I can put it on my coat. I can wear it and start these conversations with people, because all of a sudden she was like, wait a minute, they're really talking about this? This is our money.”

-Participant 31 (interview)

LBMP Becoming More Political and Politically Engaged (LF11)

“I was always a moderate voter. Voted in every election. Paid attention to the news. But I kept my political beliefs quiet and rarely talked about it. That is no longer the case! I have become very involved and very vocal.”

-Participant 8 (CIQ)

“Since being involved with Indivisible, especially understanding why Indivisible was formed, I have become much more politically aware and outspoken. I always want to go beyond the sound bites and seek out more understanding of all sides of an issue. I do this with everything, not just local politics.”
-Participant 45 (CIQ)

Community Facilitators (CF) code examples

ACRF: Community Relationships or Friendships (CF1)

“Yes, this one gal, I call her my right-hand person, the one who does the taxes for people in [redacted]. She is another real reader, and she grasps stuff and she will make pronouncements. She has said, you listen to me, this is what's going to happen. And one year later, what she said was going to happen is what happened. She's been just, it's just been so fun knowing her, and I've learned a lot from her. It was from her because of all of her reading. And then I had it confirmed that - I learned that the deficit grows under Republican presidents, and has gone down under Democratic presidents since Reagan. Why doesn't the country know? The country shouldn't know? But that's not the perception. And so that's just the kind of thing. She knows that kind of stuff. We're just constantly learning from her.”

-Participant 36 (Interview)

COLMP: Participants felt comfortable with like-minded people (CF2)

“Well, I think mostly it's just that we've had so many dedicated people who really care, and who really see the value in what we're doing here, and what we bring to our community, the broader community, but specifically the progressive community... And so we are, you know, a minority here that is a significant minority. We're outnumbered, you know, basically two, two and a half to one. And so, however, we're a big enough minority where we've been able to influence our city council elections. We have been able to get out to vote in a way that has had an influence on statewide elections, this current election being an example. And so the people who I'm referring to who have been the leaders over the past few years, the biggest thing that makes them leaders is that they show up. They show up and they care and they are willing to work cooperatively with each other. We're willing to work cooperatively with each other to expand the power that we have here... And we've just had so many people who are members of our group tell us how important the community aspect of it is, you know, because when you're in such a conservative place, it's very easy to feel alone... And I think that really matters to people who feel like they don't have a voice.”

-Participant 37 (Interview)

PSFOG: Group members provided different kinds of support (CF3)

“I was on a Zoom call earlier this year when someone broke into the discussion with breaking news and told us that the Roe decision has been leaked and that it looked from the draft decision that Roe would be overturned. We sat in stunned silence. There were about 20 people on the call.

Whatever we were talking about up until that point came to an end, and eventually people started processing the news. One person, I think on total impulse, told us about their abortion, and revealed that they had never told anyone before except for a few close family members. People, me included, were processing out-loud and in the moment what this meant at a gut-level. While we didn't know at the time what actions we would eventually take, I knew that the people on the call would fight as hard as I knew that I would to protect the right to abortion in this country.”
-Participant 39 (CIQ)

ADGD: Group discussion and dialogue supported learning (CF4)

“These [group members] generally are women who are really following things closely. And they’d basically tell us, you know, so and so is this person in the [redacted] Legislature and was doing this, or this organization was doing that, and do we want to affiliate ourselves or support them in some way? So those were the things that were on the agenda, just about every single time, someone had something that they'd been, they'd spoken to somebody who had some either insight or influence, and they were passing that along to us to talk about. So that's frequently what, how the meetings went, I mean, among other things.”
-Participant 43 (Interview)

“A lot of times at the beginning of the meeting, they'll have like an open forum type of thing and ask people you know, how are you feeling like, you know, after an election or something. Or after like, you know, it happened a lot when Trump was elected if something happened that was not positive. You know, we just have open discussion where people just may say that they feel disappointed or after a successful election or something else that was positive. You know, I feel good or, you know, whatever it was, you know, that yeah, you know, discussions like that. If there are issues that come up there'll be discussion on it, you know, I think even when the elected officials come, there are people that feel comfortable challenging them and saying, you know, like, what are you going to do about this? You know, this happens so what can you do about it?”
-Participant 48 (Interview)

CPFE: There was a place for everyone, no matter the scale or interest area (CF4)

“You know, when you have volunteers, basically, it means when you have volunteer organizations, it’s whoever wants to and agrees to do it. It's not that I was particularly gifted. Actually the team itself was led by a couple of other people before I was actually the lead for the team. And they brought on actually, I think two of them didn't even have the language skills. They just had the interest and the motivation and, and they had other skills. One of the women who led us was actually older than I am but very tech savvy, so she was into Twitter tweeting before it was widespread.”
-Participant 35 (Interview)

“There's a space for everybody in Indivisible, and nothing is too small and nothing is too big. It's just a community where you know, no matter what you want to do, there's always something to do.”

-Participant 30 (Interview)

PILS: Participants learned from inspiring leadership in their community (CF5)

“We had great leadership in Indivisible and lots of motivation. I learned anyone can jump in and make a difference. You didn’t have to be the official “leader” but just creative approaches and commitment made a big difference.”

-Participant 6 (CIQ)

AOCG: Opportunities with coalition groups facilitated learning or development (CF7)

“I was incredibly impressed by people organizing in rural areas, some of the toughest organizing anywhere. I became a dedicated worker for representing rural areas of [redacted state], taking the lessons of rural organizers, and supporting outreach to people in rural communities. This has been an incredibly powerful motivator as I think both back and ahead in my work. I joined the [redacted rural group] even though I live in an urban area, and consistently learn from their speakers & rural candidates.

-Participant 11 (CIQ)

“[Redacted] is a group that one year focused on raising money, and passing legislation that would raise money in [redacted] to spend on needed programs. You know, like the [redacted policy], that kind of thing. And it was extremely successful. They got a lot of money, and then the second year they worked on passing legislation for how to spend the money in socially productive ways. And now this year they're working on, they're coming out with a platform, I think, tomorrow of hybrid bills that will raise money. And also will work on affordable housing, you know, childcare, education. That kind of thing. So that's a coalition of multiple groups, [redacted]. There is Indivisible.... We basically listen to, they have weekly phone calls usually, sometimes, we often sit in on their phone call. And then when they have actions that they want people to do, like calling the congresspeople to do such, and so we'll publish that data in our announcement. And we'll do the phone call.”

-Participant 49 (Interview)

POGTKP: Participants gained access to politicians or public figures (CF8)

“But I will give a shout out to [senator]. I hosted a luncheon for [redacted], and he did come. It was a sellout which is a shock here in [redacted]. And it was a great event and a great fundraiser and we raised the most money for any democratic candidate in [redacted] history, just by having him here. So we do try to get the big names here, because it's important.

-Participant 34 (Interview)

“So we met monthly with um, so our district straddles two congressional districts or not our district, but our group straddles two congressional districts in [redacted]. So number one... basically, so we've got two different congressmen. And of course we have two Senators. So at the time that I joined, I think this was true for all of them. We basically had monthly meetings with the staff of each member of Congress. So every, for that, it was maybe every four to six weeks, something like that. We would sit down with the Chief of Staff, the state kind of chief for

[redacted], for [redacted], at that time. And we'd meet with their respective staff, and from time to time, we would have a meeting with [redacted]... So we would do that, and I started attending those meetings and then over time, probably, maybe a year, and after I've been doing it a year. So maybe a little bit less than that I ended up taking over the team, and being a team leader for the [redacted Senator] group... So I stepped into that and then every week, we would write agendas, obviously for those meetings, and so I got pretty involved in doing that.”

-Participant 38 (Interview)

“The name probably doesn't mean anything to you, but the man that we elected Secretary of State [Redacted] ... who was defeated in 2020. Thank God, because he's a Democrat and the poor guy who took his place got all the flack, and at least he was a Republican. But anyway, [redacted] has just won Secretary of State, and he's been at four of our different meetings because he's just the most dynamic man, and I am so excited because I think we're gonna see him on a national stage. He's just fabulous.”

-Participant 36 (Interview)

ARES: Resources, Training, and Workshops supported learning (CF9)

“I learned a lot from Truth Brigade. The value of NOT interacting with really bad content and addressing it more obliquely. This was rarely my style before learning about the "Truth Sandwich" concept.”

-Participant 19 (CIQ)

“The most significant learning for me was when I was introduced to the Indivisible Guide. It educated me into what it means to be involved in politics and showed me that there were specific actions that could be taken to influence lawmakers to pass laws. I have since taken more specific courses on the Indivisible website related to organizing, and to take specific actions such as, how to write a letter to the editor.”

-Participant 44 (CIQ)

Community Impediments to Learning or Development

NWSE Not working for the same end or goals (CI1)

“There was, the coup was actually... a couple of those people were very rigid in their ways. They had been very involved in some other groups, and were pretty rigid in the way [redacted]... So yeah, when the coup happened, it was unclear what Indivisible was doing and they slowly lost members over the next year...”

-Participant 45 (Interview)

“And the minute we start focusing on something, someone else is saying, hey, but focus on democracy, oh hey, climate is really important too. And yeah, it is. And, and so there's always this tension within our group about how to do that [referencing managing potential priorities or areas of action]. And from our prior group, and the demise of that group, essentially what that group did was establish a bunch of quite strong teams that worked extremely hard for a while. But then, they were so single issue that they started bleeding off. If the Indivisible group was talking about gun control, pretty soon it was, Well,

hey, I think you know, Moms Demand Action is really working on this. Let's go work with them instead..."

-Participant 54 (Focus group)

NEVB Everyone is very busy, limited bandwidth (CI2)

"I try to keep our Zoom meetings to like an hour. It's usually once a week on Mondays at like five o'clock, and we try to keep it to an hour. Just because everybody's busy. Right? Everybody's busy even though they're older than me, all of them. Everybody's got something else going on. A couple of them are sick, like they have medical issues and a couple of them are still working. Yeah, so it's busy. It's very individual, they're active people."

-Participant 31 (Interview)

"Our Indivisible no longer has meetings as an Indivisible group, though a few of us have been informally active with each other. The last meeting we had for which few came was a feeling of disconnect... It's disappointing that so few took the time to keep up with the group."

-Participant 23 (CIQ)

NCOV COVID-19 limited in-person meetings, or group lost momentum due to it, or social isolation, lack of regular meetings (CI3)

"Unfortunately, [readacted] retired about three or four years ago, and this couple took over. And then COVID happened, and we really haven't had... I've had a couple of meetings to keep people together at my house. And I'm friends with, you know, a lot of the people but we haven't had an in person meeting in a long time. So it's kind of fallen off since COVID... That was hard because I couldn't see anybody. We had zooms, but it wasn't the same... I mean, that's how we stayed in touch. The impersonal contact was a rough go for everybody. I mean, no, we've talked so that sustained us and what we were doing but, you know, once it was over then obviously we got back to in person meetings. I'm a hugger. And so I always miss getting a hug."

-Participant 32 (Interview)

"We have monthly general meetings that starting this summer, it was on zoom through the pandemic, but starting the summer we did start doing in person meetings again once a month. And so we have that. In the past, we've had teams, although the pandemic kind of put the wrench in that, and so we kind of had to dissipate that through the pandemic. And so part of what we're doing now is going into 2023 just trying to figure out, you know, what are the best ways to reach our members to help them activate again."

-Participant 37 (CIQ)

Appendix S: Sample Coded Transcript

Excerpt of Coded Transcript with Notes (Participant 31)

This woman from a suburban part of the Mid-Atlantic had been involved with Indivisible for four years at the time of the interview. Participant 31 described Indivisible as a safety net, and she was able to meet more like-minded people in an area where people “want guns more than anything else”. This full transcript included sections with too many personal details to redact and publish in this document. Many participants replied to open ended questions with longer responses, which provided reach in understanding the participants’ experiences and thought processes.

Researcher

Can you think of anything that you’ve learned because of your involvement in Indivisible?

Participant 31

[start: LLHTTP: Learning how to be an effective citizen and get things done in the public sphere, LF1]

Absolutely. I had no idea how people got on the ballot. I had not talked about politics. I had no idea that there was this [redacted] County Democratic committee, and they determined who got on the ballot. Like I just saw like the best for you don't even I sort of lived in this sort of, you know, I just imagined that the best people stood up and they were like, Yes, I'm gonna run. Oh, that's not how it works. And I have all sorts of grips with our...

[start: ADGD: Group discussion and dialogue supported learning, CF4]

So somebody said the other day to get on the [redacted] County Democratic committee, you have to join your town democratic board. So I was like, Okay, I'll join that. And that was actually phenomenal. Because first of all, I learned so much about our town. I live in the town of [redacted], which is again a suburb of [redacted]. But up until 2018, it was completely overrun by Republicans. I just assumed that all my neighbors were Republicans because they were there, so they ran everything. We have an issue with a quarry behind us. And anytime we would bring up the issue, the town would shut it down immediately, because the guy gave them free stone. So they wanted nothing to do with us. And then somebody like some guy and his wife who are tremendous and they're young. I love them. They stood up and said you know what, I think we can flip this town board, and I was like, well, good luck. And they said no, there are actually more Democrats than Republicans in our town. We can do this if we band together. And we did. The town board is now run by Democrats. They put all the meetings on Zoom. They publish their agenda ahead of time. It's amazing the difference just in this little town. I only joined this town Democratic thing, because at an Indivisible meeting, somebody said that's how you get on to get to vote for the [redacted] person. I've since learned that my little vote for the [redacted] is way overrun by a lot of other people at the [redacted]. But I didn't understand about petitioning. I didn't know any of that prior to doing this and I mean, I don't really like petitioning in February and March in [redacted cold area], but I do it. So yeah, I learned a lot, and again that only happened because I was at an Indivisible meeting saying, How the hell do we get this guy to run,

when you know clearly it wasn't a great candidate. They explained the process to me and said this is what you have to do. [end: LLHTP] [end: ADGD]

[Researcher note: The above section included learning to be an effective citizen - in this case, learning how people get on the ballot, and learning how to be an active member of the process by joining the county democratic committee. She learned with the support of dialogue].

Researcher

And sorry, who's explaining it to you? Is it like a fellow member?

Participant 31

It was an Indivisible person from the actual, the very first group I went to, that was a 400 person meeting. I met a woman there. Actually, she joined the Indivisible group there because of me. Her son went to high school with my son, and after Donald Trump got elected, she was beside herself and she was crying and talking to her son, and her son said you should talk to [redacted]'s mom. She does all this stuff. She'll tell you. So I brought her to the huge Indivisible meeting. And she got like, she's so involved with them, and I was like, Yeah, this is too much chaos. I can't. I don't. I have enough chaos. I need a small group that gets together, and doesn't... you know what I mean? It does something. So she stayed with the big group. I went to the small group, she and I went to - [start: ACRF: Community relationships or friendships, CF1] we met up at a presentation somebody was doing or something, and I was like, complaining about the candidate. And she said, Oh, you have to get on. And so she's the one that told me how so. She is an Indivisible person who told me, and we were at an Indivisible event, and she's the one who said, This is what you have to do. So yeah, so I did it. So now I'm part of the [redacted] County Democratic committee, and yeah, all that. [end: ACRF]

[Researcher note: Participant 31 learned about the process from a woman who was a member of a different Indivisible group. She had initially introduced her to Indivisible, but decided to join a different smaller local group because it was a more comfortable size to her].

Researcher

When thinking about yourself, and who you were prior to involvement in Indivisible and social action work, are there any things that have changed about who you feel you are or what you value?

Participant 31

[start: SSOD: Participants stayed involved because of a sense of duty or values, SF4]

I don't think my values have changed. I - my family growing up was incredibly poor. So I have a natural inclination to like, look around a group and see who the disadvantaged people are. Right? I was the first person to go to college in my family, and I'm one of [redacted] cousins. And I'm in the middle. So I only went to college because some teacher said that I should. Yeah. So our family, we were poor, really poor. So I don't think my values have changed at all. I believe in Social Security, I believe in protecting the most vulnerable among us, because at one point I was the most vulnerable among us. You know what I mean? Like it's really important to me to keep the door open behind me... [end: SSOD]

[Researcher note: Participant 31 also spoke to other experiences such as volunteering at a shelter at the southern border to support people in need. The first trip was in 2019].

[Start: LBMP: Becoming More Political and Politically Engaged, LF11]

...But personally, I've changed. Oh, I'm way more, way way more political. I was always like, I remember the Iraq War, a neighbor stopped speaking to me, because I was like, This is insanity. And she had a son. I said, You have a son, you know, this is gonna go on for years. Right? Well, her and her parents were Republican. My parents were Republican. What does that have to do? Who cares what your parents were, they're long dead. Like, that's, you know, so I had a neighbor stop speaking to me. She still pretty much doesn't. And that was over the whole George Bush thing. So I think that was outspoken about the Iraq War. But I was nowhere near as political as I am now. I'm the house when people say, Oh, where do you live? I live in the house with 18 signs. Do you know what I mean? If you're running as a Democrat in our County, I've got your sign. I wasn't like that before that. Not at all. But now I think it's important. We have to stand up.

[end: LBMP]

[Researcher note: Participant 31 was 'outspoken' about the Iraq War, but Indivisible participation was a significant change in that she decided to participate in regular Indivisible meetings and activities. The difference post 2016 was the move towards meaningful action].

Researcher

In thinking about a community-based group like Indivisible, what have your experiences taught you about effective organizing?

Participant 31

Yeah, that's a problem. Yeah, I'm just thinking about it. **[Start: SFLX: Flexible format, worked for interests and contexts]** Well, first of all, there's that 400 person group and they still are going strong as far as I know. I don't go because it's too much, but they're pretty effectively organized. I think they have all these little subgroups, and I'm on their email list and I get all their emails. So they're good. And our group is good too. And leadership is again, flexible with us. It's based on who wants to do it. Like who's gonna step up and actually, whatever it is, like who's gonna order the postcards, and who's gonna go get the labels, and who's gonna distribute things. So it's much more of a flat structure, and just thinking back, like we've been meeting since 2017. **[end: SFLX]**

Researcher

Is there anyone within that group who's been influential for your personal learning or development, other than the woman you mentioned previously in the group of 400?

Participant 31

[Start: ACRF: Community relationships and friendships, CF1] Actually a couple people. I mean, there's the woman that went to San Diego with me, she's great. She came to San Diego with me twice. I mean, think about it. We're like women in our sixties- well, I was still in my late fifties at that point. She's a little bit older than I am. And we just wandered into San Diego, not really knowing anybody and said, Hey, we want to help. I am so happy to know there's people like that out there. Right. And then there's a guy there who's actually a lawyer. I've learned a lot from him. He's in our small group. His name's [Redacted]. So I've learned a lot from him. I've

learned a lot from him. He's like a master fundraiser, and is always about having events at his house to fundraise for the various candidates. And yeah, because of him. I would say here, I've learned a lot from him. **[end: ACRF]**

Appendix T: Sample Summary Email to Participants

The sample summary email below references specific factors, sub-factors, and facilitators that were relevant to the study. Some additional context is provided directly below the email, to understand a fuller picture of what these factors looked like for one participant. Participant 48 referenced many themes in her CIQ and interviews, and some of them are included below.

Fri, Dec X, 2022

Dear [Redacted]

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me earlier! I enjoyed hearing about your experiences with Indivisible, and I think it's impressive that you've found a way to incorporate your activism work into your life in a sustainable and regular way. I'm glad that you've learned a lot through the process - like with how bills become laws with [redacted]. I also liked hearing about how you made some really positive connections -- through your friendship with your 'partner in crime', to other members of the chapter, or to broader [redacted] neighbors through your canvassing work. It's also helpful to hear how you prioritize things that are important to you (e.g. your tennis and family commitments), as well as how you're thinking forward to the next potential thing (e.g. if there is a compelling campaign to support).

I appreciate you carving out the time of your busy schedule, and I hope that you have an excellent holiday season!

Sincerely,

Jessica

Researcher note: The participant wrote back four days later on 12/6/22 stating that it was nice to go back and remember her journey as well, and wished the researcher happy holidays and good luck. She described many study themes in her CIQ and interviews, and some of them are included below.

Factors for Sustained Involvement

-SCGTE: Community members who were committed, and relationships with Indivisible members kept participants involved

(Researcher note: This participant had a regular ‘partner-in-crime’ that would go canvassing with her. They had kept running into each other at local activism related events, and then became good friends. They would find candidates to support, and would work together on initiatives - brought together by the work, as well as their growing friendship. This participant looked forward to seeing her friend.)

Sub-factors that helped to sustain involvement

-SFLX: Indivisible’s flexible format helped participants make it work for their interests and contexts

(Researcher note: This participant liked being able to decide how she spent her time, and which activism pursuits she would focus her energy on. She was able to become more involved with her local Democratic committee, and her aforementioned friend started working in government. This was in addition to her activism as her interest grew).

-STTW: Taking breaks from the work and technology can help activists stay involved

(Researcher note: When asked about burnout or how this participant avoided burnout, she said that it was important to take a break, and incorporate some downtime. She made a point to take time, take trips, read a book, and just make sure to take care of herself. She still has to think about this, and be intentional about carving out time for herself to play tennis. This participant balanced her professional work, her political work, and her extracurricular recharging activities. Her efforts to balance this work was to avoid burnout, as she realized it was a possibility).

Learning and Changes

-LLHTP: Learning how to be an effective citizen and get things done in the public sphere

(Researcher note: One learning that this participant referenced was learning how bills move through the legislature to become law. This included how they were brought up, sponsored, and how they moved through different cycles to being voted on by both houses, and signed into law by the governor. She was surprised by how complicated the process was, and felt like she had a better idea of how the government worked).

-LACORG: Activism and how to organize

(Researcher note: For this participant, she became very adept at canvassing, and knowing how to do outreach directly with potential voters).

-LMCOC: Ventured out of comfort zone, and gained confidence

(Researcher note: This participant gained confidence by learning that she was good at canvassing, and by taking on a leadership role with her local Democratic Committee. This wasn’t something she had anticipated doing, but when she stepped on she started realizing more about her capabilities.)

Community Facilitators for Learning

-ACRF: Community relationships or friendships

(Researcher note: This participant's learning was supported by her friendship with the person she liked canvassing with, and they would bring back knowledge from government or from committee work that they could share with each other.)

-ADGD: Discussion Groups or opportunity for dialogue

(Researcher note: Dialogue was fostered in the Indivisible group, with the local Democratic committee, with her 'partner-in-crime' and also with potential voters in which she articulated why she believed in certain candidates or policies).

-PSFOG: Support from others in group

(Researcher note: This participant received support with her main activism friend who she said she could always count on. This friend was always willing to help her out with initiatives, and she could count on her support if she wanted to do things like host a meet and greet for a political candidate, or needed someone to ride with her on a canvassing date.)

Appendix U: Brief Participant Notes

This section has been included in the appendix to give brief participant notes for the reader, in the event that they were interested in a specific participant. As the CIQs were shorter than the interviews, some descriptions are briefer than others.

CIQ-only population

1. Participant 1: Calling herself an “Indivisible for life,” this participant from a suburban area in the Southwest had been involved with Indivisible for two years, along with other social action or civic engagement organizations. Indivisible gave her the opportunity to complain, share joy, and laugh with brilliant activists she admired. She learned how to be an effective citizen who felt she could make a difference. Having learned the power of social media messaging, postcarding, and writing letters to the editor, she had positive experiences with other local area groups. That helped her get through the Trump years with a sense of community and purpose.
2. Participant 2: This participant from a suburban area from the Southwest had been involved for 5+ years, and had taken on a leadership role. He learned firsthand how campaigns are won on the ground. Participation included canvassing, phone banking, and text banking. Though he had hoped to create additional bonds with Indivisible colleagues, that did not happen, which was a disappointment. He had also been engaged with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.
3. Participant 3: After the 2016 Election, this participant spent a few weeks in a daze. The energy of the Indivisible movement and group inspired her; after forming her group, she brought forward that drive in a leadership role. From a rural area in the West, she has been involved with Indivisible for 5+ years, along with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017. Her Indivisible group became her passion. She wrote, “From that day until today, it became my job, maybe my obsession, something that drives me, something that for the first time in my life I did from my heart.” She described having enlightenment when she realized how many outside groups and people were affiliated with the progressive resistance movement. She felt like her ideas could be supported to enact change. This participant made a point to treat all her group members with respect, and to thank them for their involvement. She always followed meeting days with ordering out: her reward for a tiring meeting.
4. Participant 4: This man came from a suburban area in the Southwest, and had 5+ years of experience with Indivisible. He discussed learning about Request to Speak from Civic Engagement Beyond Voting at an Indivisible rally outside of his senator’s office. This allowed him to give his opinion on bills pending before his state legislature without having to call or email his representatives. He also learned that it was only worth his time to reach out to office holders that represent his district. Due to safety fears, he later restricted his activism to work he could do from home. Despite a move, he remained in

contact with the colleagues with whom he had protested. He had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.

5. Participant 5: This participant from an urban area in the Southwest developed a passion for registering people to vote. She had since attended Naturalization ceremonies, finding them very moving. Devastated after the election, she learned how the government works through her involvement. In the CIQ, she referenced learning about all of the state representatives, how counties were divided into precincts, and the number of counties in their state. This participant was extremely grateful to Indivisible for the participation opportunities that enabled her to take an active part in maintaining democracy in her five-plus years with Indivisible, including a leadership role. She had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.
6. Participant 6: This study participant gained confidence in her value and contributions, finding inspiration from the leader of her Indivisible chapter who was always interested in new ideas and solutions. She learned that anyone can jump in and make a difference without being an official “leader.” In the CIQ, she noted that everyone has different contributions. She had worked on messaging among other things, it mattered what a person could do in the process. From a suburban area in the Midwest, she had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, and other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.
7. Participant 7: This individual from a rural part of the Southwest, had been involved for 5+ years, taken on a leadership role, and had been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017. They learned a lot about political organizing through osmosis, created a large Facebook and email list, and collaborated with a coalition group from California that came to help organize in their state. They never thought they would be a good organizer or potential group leader as a group. They recognized that they had become a good organizer. They set-up trainings, and enjoyed collaborative efforts and networking to accomplish their goals. They felt politically astute, and wished that more of the retired people in their area would get involved in sustaining democracy, in addition to the regulars who kept showing up to do the worst.
8. Participant 8: Thinking her votes for Clinton and her incumbent Republican representative would serve as a “checks and balance,” this participant reconsidered after being treated rudely by the representative’s congressional staff. Upon departing that meeting, she met two Indivisible members in the parking lot. She became an involved activist writing postcards to voters, and she became more vocal in expressing her political beliefs. Involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, she was a suburban area in the Midwest.
9. Participant 9: Constantly learning through her involvement with her Indivisible involvement, this participant noted it both felt uncomfortable at times to exercise civic muscles and it felt good to effect change. From a suburban area in the Mid-Atlantic, she had been involved in Indivisible for five-plus years, had taken on a leadership role, and had been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.

Participant 9 felt close to various group members, including someone that would get down and she found ways to give her hope, as well as another person who said the group kept him sane and changed his life. He was in his nineties, and she said he was such a good group member. Her group decided to adopt neighboring districts, and supported their members' areas of concerns.

10. Participant 10: Participation led to feeling empowered, proud, and feeling like she was making a difference for this participant. Through her involvement, she learned she was not an Independent politically. She met a mentor who had been there for her over time. With her marketing expertise, she facilitated communication between groups for events to further mutual goals. Her skills connecting and introducing people helped groups support each other. She was from a suburban area in the Midwest, had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, and had been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.
11. Participant 11: This woman from an urban area in the Southwest met volunteers from all over the country at an in-person national gathering in 2019. The lessons of rural organizers have served as a powerful motivator as she reflects back and ahead in her work, and has continued to learn about rural candidates and speakers despite living in an urban area. She has become knowledgeable about her state Legislature, and has worked with others to connect legislator names to the "bad policies they promote." She discussed being in an unusually cohesive group that has fiercely safeguarded their nonpartisan, but not neutral, stance. Her statewide organizer has been very inspiring for her, and their relationship has grown over the course of her participation with "trust and honesty since."
12. Participant 12: From a suburban area in the Midwest, this participant had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, and said it was good to feel like it was part of a solution. She became active in the group's Facebook group, and learned about the dishonesty of the Trump administration, losing her naivete in the process. She learned by reading specific rebuttals to things they did, and feels she has the words to dispute misinformation. In addition to online participation, she also participated in lighted sign protests for a couple of years.
13. Participant 13: Living in a rural area in the Midwest, Indivisible helped remind this participant of the areas of concern shared by urban and rural votes. She was involved with Indivisible for three years, primarily as a consumer and user of information, and referenced a chart that shared reliable sources. Group members reacted to each other's personal pictures, and despite not having group members close to her, this helped her feel more connected to them. She had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.
14. Participant 14: By taking advantage of learning Zoom to attend Indivisible meetings during the Covid pandemic, this participant learned tiny margins can make a big difference in a race. From a suburban area in the West, she had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years. Her involvement with writing postcards made her feel useful and a little bit powerful. Her path to becoming involved with Indivisible started by

donating money, then paying more attention to political news, then writing postcards, and then joining other coalition groups. She writes email letters to her members of congress, and feels connected to the other postcard writers as they meet up for in-person writing parties.

15. Participant 15: Becoming braver, more outspoken, and better able to let things roll off her back, this participant from a rural area in the Mid-Atlantic had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years. Through her participation, she learned there were more progressive people in her red county than she had thought. She believed that it is necessary to push forward so that people in the United States and the world can be safer and more secure. She became the campaign manager for a first-time candidate for a local office, which is something she never anticipated doing. She had taken on a leadership role with Indivisible; she had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.
16. Participant 16: This participant learned that when leading a big meeting, it was necessary to take charge or the meeting could go haywire. From an urban area in the Midwest, she had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, taken on a leadership role, and had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017. Her experiences caused her to realize that she was capable of being a good facilitator. Participant 16 also learned how to identify people's strengths and weaknesses in a group, how to invite people in to engage with a group, and to speak in public. The experience of being involved changed the way she views the world, and she received a lot of support from friends in the group.
17. Participant 17: This woman from a rural area in a Mid-Atlantic state was involved with Indivisible for 5+ years, and had taken on a leadership role. Prior to the 2016 Presidential Election, she had known little of the political world, and this changed through her involvement. Her involvement started through a friend, which led to a conversation with six other people, then thirty people, then a community meeting with 150 people, and at the time of the study, a distribution list of 500 people. Their group included a weekly newsletter, monthly meetings, and participation with representatives from many coalition grassroots groups.
18. Participant 18: Joining with prior knowledge experience in organizations and workplaces, this participant was used to working with groups to facilitate and encourage. She learned how to develop relationships with political leaders and organize advocacy. Through her participation, she developed close relationships with leaders from three other groups. Involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, living in a rural area in New England, she had taken on a leadership role. She noted she had received mentoring by experienced advocates. She learned how to organize canvassing events, and started canvassing in other communities.
19. Participant 19: This participant learned the value of not interacting with bad content. From a suburban area in the South, she had been involved with Indivisible for four years. She found writing postcards tedious, but satisfying to turn in. Participating in Indivisible

made her feel less alone, and she wished that she could make more meetings and events. She had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.

20. Participant 20: Connecting with people she identified as being as angry and passionate as she had been, this participant worked with group members on the 2018, 2020, and 2022 elections. She was from a suburban area in the Midwest and had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, and taken on a leadership role. She held many rallies through other groups, having become involved with other social action or civic organizations. She did not think she would have become this type of organizer without first starting with her local Indivisible group.
21. Participant 21: This woman from a suburban part of the Midwest had been involved with Indivisible for four years at the time of the study, and also was involved with other related organizations since 2017. Reflecting in her CIQ, she wrote that she was shaped at how she was ashamed at how she was disengaged previously due to privilege. She learned through conversations, presentations by activists, and self-study. Since 2016, she had hosted regular postcard writing in-person get togethers in her house, and found it heartening that so many people from Indivisible participated in this activity.
22. Participant 22: Through Indivisible, this person met their city representative and school board member, which helped them develop constructions to start a non-profit. Living in a suburban area in New England, they had been involved with Indivisible for two years. They learned about canvassing, and all the work that goes into doing that. They reported that they grew as a leader and grew in their professional career through their participation.
23. Participant 23: Participant 23 was from a suburban part of the Midwest, was involved for 5+ years at the time of the CIQ, and learned how to run for local office through her participation. Her Indivisible leader put together a learning experience where people who had run for office in the past described the experience, and how they tried to win. Before 2016, she had been ambivalent about paying attention to politics, and now she phones and writes to her congresspeople and tries to attend both sides. One challenge is that she feels she had to hide her participation from her husband, who had 180 degree opposite views from her.
24. Participant 24: Using the word “visionary” to describe her Indivisible leader, this participant related that the group leader invited a journalism professor to teach the group how to write media advisories and press releases. Her involvement helped her improve her writing and editing skills significantly, and also has become more comfortable with public speaking. Many of the people in her Indivisible group are now some of her closest friends, and she cited many activities such as weekly rallies, monthly in-person meetings, and being a part of the leadership team with weekly meetings as helping to develop these relationships. She also opted into a sub-group focused on climate, and led a weekly political recap meeting on Zoom during the pandemic. She was from a small city in a

rural county in New England, had been involved for 5+ years, and had taken on a leadership role.

25. Participant 25: She learned how influential the chief of staff can be in influencing congressional or state representatives, as well as senators; this participant enjoyed developing relationships with the chiefs of staff of her legislators. Through her participation, she learned to read laws fully, as well as how to write new laws that she proposed. In her CIQ, she reported that she is now excellent at writing legislation. Living in a suburban area in the South, she had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years and had taken on a leadership role. Living in a suburban area in the South, she had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years and had taken on a leadership role.
26. Participant 26: This participant learned that to get additional people engaged, it was important to do things like hold regular events people could count on, reach out to potential participants in a variety of ways, make events fun, and follow-up on events with reports of the outcomes. She learned from experience, as well as some training sessions from Indivisible National. Despite stated obstacles of finances, bad weather, COVID, and delayed shipments of postcards, she persevered. She started organizing postcard parties, and later phone and text banks. She started viewing herself as a leader, and people have turned to her for advice on elections and political events. From an urban area in the Mid-Atlantic, she had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, and had taken on a leadership role. She had been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.
27. Participant 27: From a suburban area of the Midwest, this participant had been involved with Indivisible for 4 years, and had taken on a leadership role. She learned about how a non-profit is formed, a “tremendous amount” about how campaigns work, and how to lobby her congressional representative.
28. Participant 28: Prior to Indivisible, this participant had never taken part in a protest, march, or rally. From a suburban area in the West, she had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, and also other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017. She learned how to organize a protest at a town hall, how to lobby within her state government, and participated in an equity and inclusion working group with her city council. She joined a community advisory committee in their area, and joined other coalition groups.
29. Participant 29: This participant would not have stayed involved as a volunteer if she did not believe the organization respected its members, and praised Indivisible for this reason. She had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations. Living in a rural area of the Southwest with five-plus years of involvement with Indivisible, she had taken on a leadership role. She thought that the group’s morals, values and structure would serve most companies well. She spoke highly about Indivisible leadership, and appreciated how they sought out the experience and knowledge that may be found in Indivisible communities.

Interview and CIQ participants

30. Participant 30: Indivisible was more than a community for his participant; it almost felt like family. Encouraged by people in her personal life, as well as Indivisible, she continued to grow as a leader and to use her experience and background to improve conditions for people in her area. Living in a suburban area in the Southwest with five-plus years of involvement with Indivisible, she had taken on a leadership role. She noted that she had a very supportive family and community, and had recently been elected to an office in her area. She had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.
31. Participant 31: Describing Indivisible as a safety net, this participant stated it enabled her to meet more like-minded people in an area where she felt many people “want guns more than anything else.” The smaller group worked better for her than the first 400 person group she had visited. Living in a suburban part of the Mid-Atlantic, she had been involved with Indivisible for four years at the time of the interview. She learned how the local democratic committee picked candidates, and the process of getting candidates on the ballot. Her group hosted fundraisers and candidate interviews, and she met very interesting people. She went to the southern border of the United States, related to her interest in supporting families.
32. Participant 32: Regularly inviting people over to share food and conversation and for people to learn from each other’s backgrounds, this participant thought she might be able to make a difference in bringing people together. She grew up in a diverse area of California. She noted her current community was all straight, white, and Christian, living in a suburban area of the Southwest. She had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, and had taken on a leadership role. She liked hosting, and gave many accounts when she had opened up her home to people, and fundraising functions. She found her niche in building longer-term relationships with people from Black, Muslim, and immigrant communities.
33. Participant 33: Intimidated by the prospect of being an activist, this participant went to the Women’s March after the election, her first ever protest. Having never gone to a protest or rally or holding up a sign; she felt it incredibly liberating. She first became involved with a different coalition group, felt it was a bit disorganized, and she felt better supported by Indivisible. One thing she learned was that for events, only 50% of the people who affirmatively RSVP will actually show up. She was able to make new friendships through her involvement. She had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017. From an urban area in the Midwest, she had been involved with Indivisible for four years, and had taken on a leadership role.
34. Participant 34: This woman from a rural part of the West had been involved with Indivisible for 5+ years, and she had moved to a very red area after retirement to be close to family. The 2016 Presidential Election made her think that the President would be more dangerous than people thought, and decided she could no longer sit on the sidelines. Her religious background gave her a strong education, and she had always been very

strong in her beliefs. She said that her belief system had always been strong, even as a child. Before committing to Indivisible, she did research online regarding other options. Indivisible appealed to her because their approach was policy-oriented, and her professional background gave her strong research skills which helped to inform her work. She loved any work related to educating people (e.g. writing letters to the editor, postcards, and lunch and learns).

35. Participant 35: This woman from the Southwest had been involved with Indivisible for 5+ years, and had taken on a leadership role. Because of her language skills, she started supporting Dreamers when there was that need. She learned the power of grassroots action, and approaches to educating the public in a conservative and polarized environment. Through her involvement, she reaffirmed and strengthened her commitment to supporting and fighting for just causes. With Indivisible, she was able to find solace in the group as it reflected her core values - as the election in 2016 threw her into a full bout of depression. While her connection with group members was created by the opposition, she explained that it now represents support and hope. Even when she was feeling low, she could count on her core group within Indivisible to help boost her up.
36. Participant 36: From a suburban part of the Southwest, this participant had been involved in Indivisible for five-plus years, and had taken on a leadership role. She had never been politically engaged before, but it became part of her identity. She learned how to send individual texts to large groups of people, and became very close with people in her group's Steering Committee. Participant 36 conducted a great deal of independent research of reading and translating current events so that she could share them with her group's members. She had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.
37. Participant 37: Indivisible gave this participant a place to concentrate his energy, and inspired him to take action rather than to feel despair. He felt grateful he was connected to a whole community he would not have known without Indivisible, and called the experience "profound." He had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017. Living in a rural area in the Southwest, he had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years and had taken on a leadership role. One of his roles was managing his group's Twitter page; he was able to attract a large following. While he was basically self-taught, he received tips and advice from others to make the group's presence more effective
38. Participant 38: This man from a rural area of the West had been involved with Indivisible for 5+ years, and had taken on a leadership role. He learned that many Congressional leaders are focused on policy and legislation, but not aware about their potential role in shaping public opinion. He pushed back with one of his Senator's Chief of Staff, and advocated for them to take a stronger public position on gun control. He spoke about the importance of messaging, and noted that shaping public opinion is an important part of the work for people involved in politics. He enjoyed being with other people who cared about the same things, and worked with a great number of lovely people who were together in the same fight.

39. Participant 39: This participant's life changed significantly due to her involvement. She was introduced to people and ideas she had not considered in the past. Living in an urban area of the Midwest, she had been involved with Indivisible for four years, and had taken on a leadership role. Her involvement started by creating a Facebook group and inviting strangers to a coffee shop meeting to discuss what had happened with the 2016 Election, a precursor to joining an Indivisible group. She learned through the 'action hours' of her state's legislative session, and worked with her group members to take action with their elected officials. Her group would focus on an issue, research it, track the legislation, follow it through committees and floor votes, and write calls to action when contacting elected officials.
40. Participant 40: Through Indivisible, this participant learned the importance of the optics of events: pictures and videos of actions were important and they could be further amplified on social media. While he did not use social media, he found it both fascinating and terrifying that such tools could sway public opinion. He was aware they could be used by bad actors as well. He became interested in reviewing the actions of an independent redistricting commission due to his interest and support of fair and competitive districts. He felt 'safe' political districts, resulting from gerrymandering, are devastating for democracy. This was the area to which he wanted to dedicate his future efforts. He was from a suburban area in the Southwest and had been involved with Indivisible for three years.
41. Participant 41: This woman from a suburban area of the West had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, and became very active in her group's education subcommittee. Their first goal was to get the school district to declare a safe haven resolution, to let undocumented families know that the children would be protected at school. She learned about her local school board members, how many of them were extremely conservative, and that some didn't even live in her city. Participant 41 cared about education a great deal, and did not give up despite her concerns taking months. She was able to push herself out of her comfort zone, and was proud of what her group had accomplished. Participant 41 has become much more progressive through her involvement, and the book *We are Indivisible* helped her understand the group's long-term goals and how to achieve them.
42. Participant 42: This man from a rural area in the West had been involved with Indivisible for 5+ years at the time of the study, and had taken on a leadership role. After the 2016 Election, he researched organizations that would fight against the administration. He was angry after the election, and was specifically interested in becoming involved in electoral works. There were many people that he felt connected with, such as a man who helped him with a postcard campaign, and a woman in a nearby town who wanted to revive an Indivisible chapter. He tried to help people who needed it, and interacted with many Indivisible chapters and coalition groups to lend his data analysis and research skills. His wife also became involved in the work with his encouragement.

43. Participant 43: This participant from an urban area of the Midwest was the editor of his local Indivisible group's weekly newsletter, and had been involved for four years. This participant observed that his group had many more women than men, and the ratio was often 5 to 2 (women to men). His group held events on bridges, participated in postcard writing, canvassed, and had in-person meetings. He did not enjoy canvassing, and decided to dedicate his efforts to other activities – though he did give it a try. Participant 43 specifically joined his group because he wanted to get rid of a local congressman, but since then was about to find fulfillment from other Indivisible members that helped identify other ways to help candidates.
44. Participant 44: From a suburban area in the South, this participant had been involved with Indivisible for four years, taken on a leadership role, and had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017. She referenced the Indivisible Guide as being influential, and had learned online through training focused on organizing and how to write letters to the editor. She was introverted, and so it was hard to reach out. What she did discover was a passion for text messaging; it suited her. Despite some mobility challenges, she participated in a counter protest of a Trump rally. She saw her involvement and the fight as being long term: a marathon, not a sprint.
45. Participant 45: Through her involvement, this participant became more politically aware and outspoken, now seeking out more information to understand all sides of an issue. From a suburban area in the West, she had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, and had taken on a leadership role. She participated with her local Legislative Action Team, and met with politicians. Through her involvement, became more politically aware and outspoken, now seeking out more information to understand all sides of an issue. This participant felt connected and impressed by an Indivisible member's creativity and amazing work. They had emotional ties and joy over a local representative winning their election. She had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.
46. Participant 46: This woman from an urban area of the Southwest had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, and had taken on a leadership role. She became part of her local Indivisible protest group, and would often protest outside with signs more than once a week. She developed a passion for making signs, thinking of messaging, and liked talking to other people who enjoyed protesting outside. She had always been interested in politics, but the Women's March in 2017 was what prompted her to do more. Through Indivisible, she strengthened her understanding and commitment to democracy.
47. Participant 47: This woman from a suburban area of the Mid-Atlantic was involved with Indivisible for 5+ years, and had taken on a leadership role. Her group had a health action group that decided to hold a town hall to save the ACA – which was inspired by the Indivisible Guide. None of the participants had ever done anything like that, but in three weeks, they hosted the town hall with 400 people, all three congressmen for her county, and 20 other local officials with doctors and patients testifying about the importance of the ACA. Through their involvement, they realized the group's power. She learned a great deal about building participatory organizations, and she felt very grateful for all of

the amazing people in her group. She had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.

48. Participant 48: This participant gained the confidence to speak to elected officials about legislation to try to influence their votes. She learned how bills become laws. She became friends with a woman she kept running into at Indivisible meetings and political action events, and they started canvassing together. They have since volunteered for multiple candidates together, and traveled to other more competitive districts. Living in a suburban area in the Mid-Atlantic, she had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, and had also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.
49. Participant 49: Involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, this participant from a suburban area in the Mid-Atlantic had taken on a leadership role. She learned about her state budgeting process, and participated in in-person, as well as online meetings. Her group leader was particularly influential. This group leader thought how much everyone did was up to them; they were working on actions because they were important. The leader's assumption that she Participant 49 would do things outside of her comfort zone helped encourage her to do them. She absorbed the belief that the work was everyone's responsibility. She also made multiple good friends.
50. Participant 50: This man from an urban area in the Mid-Atlantic had been involved with Indivisible for 5+ years at the time of the interview, and had taken on a leadership role with a co-leader. Through his involvement, he learned about his leadership capabilities, and he was very proud of what he was able to accomplish. He thought that the skills that he developed both personally and professionally can be put to work in encouraging others to participate in protecting democracy. He was able to bond with his co-group leader over their shared work, and noted that there is now a sense of responsibility for group members towards each other. He also developed fundraising skills through the process of being involved, and was very effective in this area.
51. Participant 51: When he first joined, this participant was surprised by how many Indivisible members were interested in cause advocacy, but not electoral politics. He thought that because democracy was under threat, saving democracy required involvement in electoral politics. Through his involvement, he became more patient with others' points of views, and became appreciative of the people in his community who had a deeper commitment to politics than he possessed. He was able to use his legal background to teach with another group leader to conduct a talk on democracy. He did not use his professional specialty in his Indivisible work. From an urban area in the Mid-Atlantic, he had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years.

Focus Group and CIQ participants

52. Participant 52: This woman from an urban area in the South had been involved with Indivisible for four years. She learned the importance of contacting her representatives, even if they had extremist viewpoints. She also started seeing a broader range of things

that should be changed in American life, and now has higher expectations in areas where she thought that the government falls short. Participant 52 has stayed in contact with several other Indivisible members who used to attend Board of Elections meetings before those went online, and they have stayed involved online, and through phone calls.

53. Participant 53: This woman from an urban area of the Southwest, and had been involved with Indivisible for four years, and had taken on a leadership role. She learned about how influential political organizing can be in bringing together community members to work on common goals and to sustain shared values. Her involvement included both participation with her local chapter, as well as Indivisible at the state-level. Her learning largely took place through taking action like canvassing, phone and text banking, and engaging with candidates, but the group members also shared information and books.
54. Participant 54: When starting as a leader, this participant had spent more time on the organizational structure, mission statement, and infrastructure. She learned that building engagement and recruiting membership were important too. She found it easier to recruit people to volunteer for an afternoon or attend a rally, rather than to lobby. She learned about the importance of building relationships, and thought that events with candidates and literature drops could be important for engaging voters. From a suburban area in the Midwest, this participant had been involved with Indivisible for four years, taken on a leadership role, and also been involved with other social action or civic engagement organizations since 2017.
55. Participant 55: Before the 2016 Election, this participant had been a “news junkie”; other than the occasional donation, she hadn’t been involved. She thought action alleviated anxiety, and she learned about grassroots organizing. Her whole group was new to political organizing. They have created many events to engage friends and neighbors in the work. She called her involvement an “amazing and positive ride.” From a suburban area in the Midwest, she had been involved with Indivisible for five-plus years, and taken on a leadership role. Indivisible helped provide her with support, in-depth knowledge, and encouragement with creative ways to get things done.