



Digital Democracy: Needfinding

Team Generation-G
Garrick F. | Gen S. | Grace W.



Garrick

Coterm, CompSci
will graduate soon



Gen

Senior, SymSys
funnier in person



Grace

Senior, Econ
still plays tetris

Mission

We are looking to solve problems
in the digital democracy space
(news consumption or discussion).

Needfinding Methodology



Who?

Recent college grad, i.e. 20–30 age range



Why?

Most interested in targeting this audience



How?

Solicited 15–20 min. interviews on views re: democracy



Where?

Downtown Palo Alto

We found:

2 M | 2 F (& 1 dog)

~21-29 y.o.

College, to out of
college, to
working on Ph.D.



Discussion Guide

THEMES

Voting behavior

News consumption

Interpersonal discussions
about politics

Involvement in politics

EXAMPLE Q'S

Walk me through the last
time you voted.

What is the last headline
you remember?  

How do you inform
yourself politically?



Interview Results
(Some threads we dug at...)

Finding interesting news...

[Why pick an article on Trump?]

"There's no like specific reason, but I just want to know how the world is going day-to-day and found he is kind of, like, an issue maker."

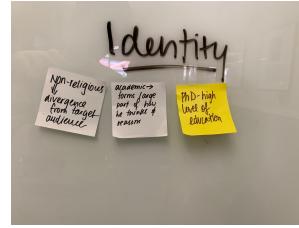


M



F, 27, Korean
Works in psych lab

M, Indian
Getting Ph.D. in
Economics



"We decided this was the time to go for a change, and personally I decided to vote against communism and vote...it turned out that was not the better option, but at the moment, it felt like a change was required."

Moved to vote when...



Why certain beliefs?

...whereas, where I grew up, which is in Fresno, a lot of poor people are there. And they kind of stay in this cycle of being poor, and use welfare to get by.



M, Recent Cal Grad
Biology
Conservative parents

What impacted you?



F, 21, Studying CS
Immigrant family
Activist background

"It's called Tacoma. And it has the America's biggest detention center there. So interesting. Every, every other week, we would go to the detention center and like, talk to people there and just like provide human connection."

Empathy Maps
(with highlights)

I

Say

Narrow focus on economic concerns
Politicians should be able to tell their story

Clearly articulated concerns w/ national religion

Very historical - fact-oriented retelling of the story

Controversy

"Twitter has a lot of noise"

Has no time for technical writing

Like China, not political, but economic

"I don't care about what you say"

Got very technical in examples

"not very politically oriented"

Initially prompted: I read the newspaper [accuracy, readability]

not politically oriented

'anti'- religious / not mainline

not used to see people go political & ignorant

Do

Last time voting was held last in 2011 [Final]

targeted source

news source = Twitter, TRUST, need of public by persona

reads Twitter for news ID's

doesn't issue a public platform

community bonding tool for voter turnout

Not much story telling

Picked out an academic journal [clicked in]

Workaround for Twitter's [not follow only people] know [ID]

Following people you meet or know
Read newspapers and [ID's] and Twitter

Think

New as source of militancy
Perceives watching the news as being highly forward

Policies highest priority is economy [China in the 80s]

case in writing suspicion

controversy new?

After not pol. oriented in US [IE homelessness/leads]

Did not see [ID] in pol. oriented in moments but same time

Non-religious divergence from target audience

Feel

non/technical dominates
trusts someone if they criticize everyone

political affiliation not dominate from beginning comparison of other cities, feels disconnected

less idealistic, more standard of living

political climate unchanged to policy

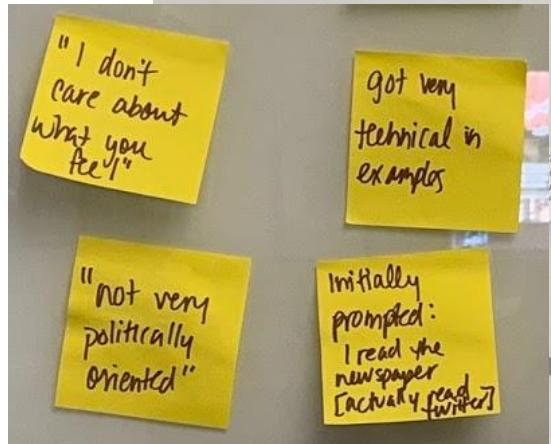
"biggest" trade policy

Rhetoric on change [communism, right wing]

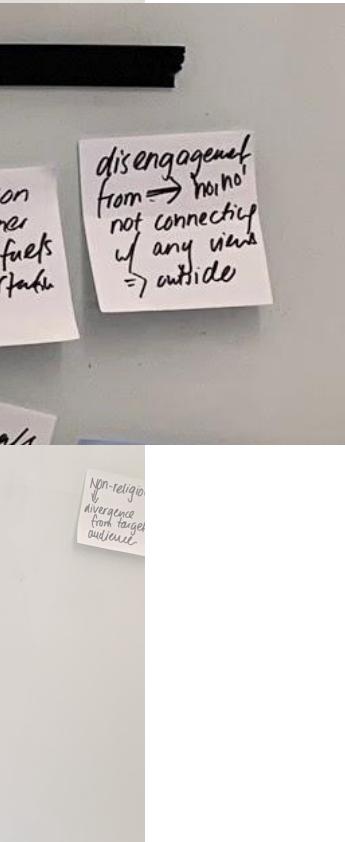
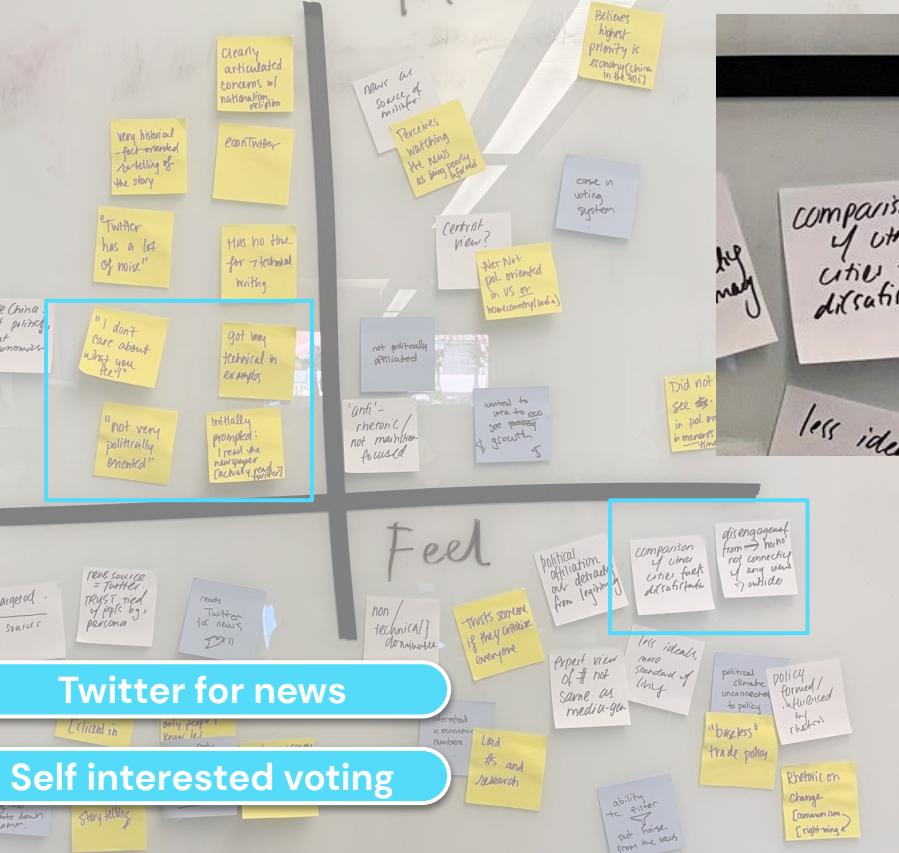
ability to either [ID] our voice from the seats

I

Say



Think



Twitter for news

Self interested voting

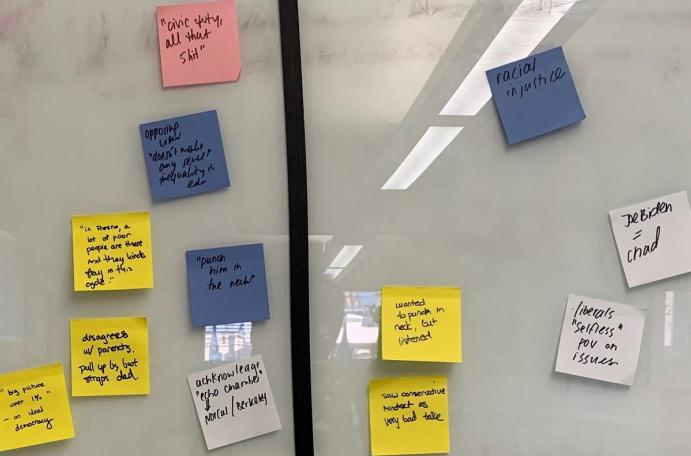
S

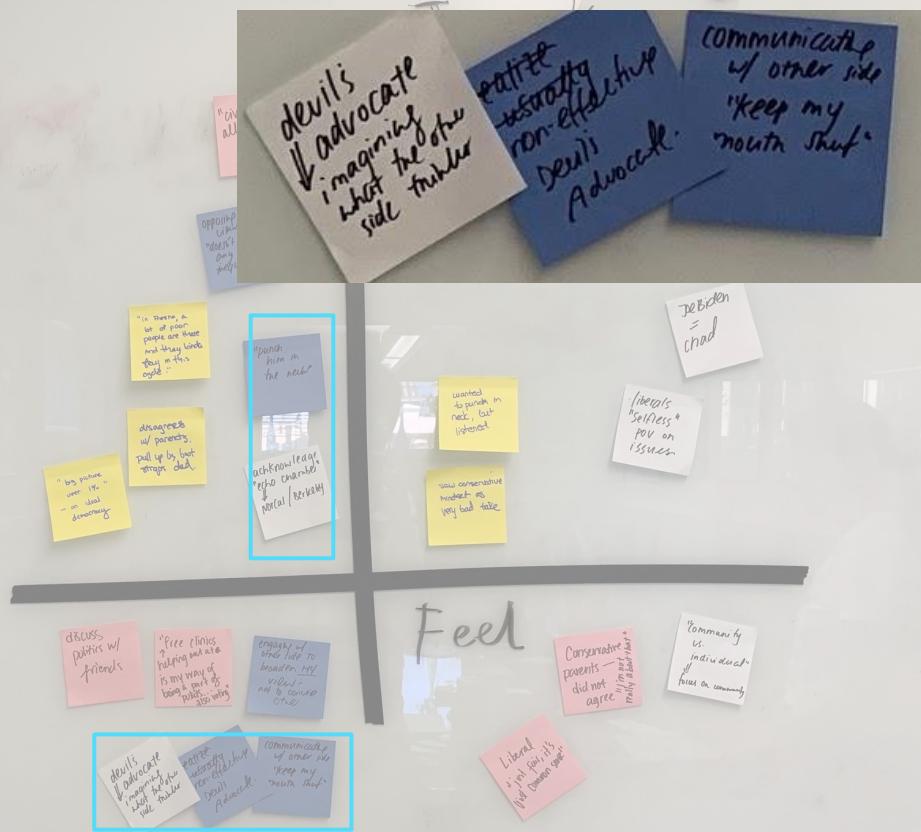
Say

Think

Do

Feel





Difficulty/reward with engaging the other side

K

Say

"it hurts"
feels like
loss of sense
of community

"disturbing"
detention
center

"progressive"
racial
justice

"I feel
like my
body
is not
safe.
-> keeping
up
my
rights"

"you got no
place where you
can comfortably
have a conversation"

I see my
choice
every now and
then
"keeping up w/
the news, talking,
etc."

"I don't identify
with either
but seemed
liberal."

"if I want to
learn what's
happening in
the world, it's
brightest
way to keep
myself informed
and see what's
happening."

Think

[Republican]
blamefully dirige
the needs of
people who need
help to it

IR orientation
from US view
of land to
Native perspective

biased news
news bias
AFS far too
biased
FORTRAN, Native

biased news
biased methods
not just
observation

Algorithmically
collected news
[news never is
complicated]

biased by
interested party
influenced by
informational bias

Chad +
white ignorant
white person
w/ good smile

viewers
are biased

detention
center
v. prison

"what did you
get to that point
where you are
concerned about
your belief in
your family?"

Immigrants

Do

Used to be
a protester
in Washington
(los since moving
to CA)

political
activism ->
BEN

discuss politics
w/ friends

"I didn't get
to talk [while
visiting the
detention center]

Takes further
action
seek and raise
opinions

get
information on
issue
- re political
beliefs

seek out
news for
a topic

joined club
to visit Tucson
detention
center

Volunteer
@ America's
Longest Detention
Center

environment
and physical
space (finishing
kind of
investment)

weak regions
more protest
oriented
Here more keeping up

wants
normal fair
re: sources

community
in political
movement

quilt about
most deep
much need to
communicate
before

language
matter to her

Help > migration
problem
ideally as
immigrant

Feel

CONTRADICTION:
Actively uses
aggressive language
but it's usually
by gets persecuted
or attribution

feels pessimistic
about issues

strangely about
fairness, equity

skeptical
about news
from news

positive @
agreement
politically

felt detention
center was
strangely
managed

"I just learned
learned about
this morning.
I need to calm
down."

K

Say

Think

Do

Engagement over news



Insights, Needs, Further Questions

(less trees were harmed in
this exercise)

I. tension between knowing political facts but rejecting political rhetoric / affiliations

K. Moved back to California, was less involved with activism. Felt guilty about that

|
G +1

I. Less news = more informed

S. Uses devil's advocate and believes that is a reasonable substitute for talking to folks who disagree

Grace Wang is typing...
K&S: liberals as 'right', 'fair', but also

Gen Singer is typing...
K. Believes that international news

I. Last long time

M. stay news /

K. Use language

M. Did source laptop

I. Very care about the fact

Tensions
M. tension between parents and peers
I. tension between knowing political facts but rejecting political rhetoric / affiliations
K. Moved back to California, was less involved with activism. Felt guilty about that
I. tension between democratic structure and law and economic progress (he really wants economic progress)

Contradictions
I. Says he reads the news but actually reads Twitter
I. Less news = more informed
S. Uses devil's advocate and believes that is a reasonable substitute for talking to folks who disagree
K&S: liberals as 'right', 'fair', but also not vilifying/persecuting Republicans

Surprises
I. Uses twitter, but only to follow people he knows (Econ twitter)
I. Last time he voted was in 2011, a long time ago
M. stays more connected to Korean news / politics even after moving to US GW  +1
K. Used the most emotionally charged language, language like "it hurts"
M. Did very "default/low-energy" news sources (i.e. Apple News, Google on laptop)
I. Very anti emotional rhetoric: "I don't care about how you feel. Just give me the facts and I'll decide"
S: Joe Biden = Chad
K. Believes that international news is less biased than US news towards American politics
K. General skepticism about news sources

Gen Singer

News, but is it?

+

I. Says he reads the news but actually reads Twitter

+2

I. Less news = more informed

x

Contradictory Statements here

+

K. Used the most emotionally charged language, language like "it hurts"

x

I. Very anti emotional rhetoric: "I don't care about how you feel. Just give me the facts and I'll decide"

+1

I. Uses twitter, but only to follow people he knows (Econ twitter)

+1

M. Did very "default/low-energy" news sources (i.e. Apple News, Google on laptop)

+1

News, but is it? +

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Online/offline communities +

I. Uses twitter, but only to follow people he knows (Econ twitter) +1

M. tension between parents and peers +1

M. Did very "default/low-energy" news sources (i.e. Apple News, Google on laptop) +1

Need/Insight: Twitter is known to be a less reliable news source (bots, algorithmic collection of abusive content regardless of truth value), but folks still use it to read the news even if they agree with above

Need/insight: some people feel very passionately about the news/politics, and others just don't

Maybe what's more, you only care if it benefits you (i.e. economic growth)

w.r.t K&I: having more people around you exposes you to more news

Need/Insight: many people gravitate towards frictionless sources of news

There's a spectrum of involvement in informedness

Questions: what do we mean by news? Do folks use the word "news" mean different things to different people?

Question: how does using emotional language change the recipient's perception of your view

How do communities set norms and tone for internal discussion (ex. Facebook comments, Reddit threads, Twitter)?

Questions: what does a tight-knit information community look like? Does that improve trust and promote healthy dialogue?

Question: what are the factors in making news frictionless? Is this a good end goal to begin with? How does this vary among different people?



"Twitter has a lot of noise."

"Yeah, it's probably the wrong [platform], but this morning I read Twitter."

[Do you ever take a look or take into consideration what source the news is coming from?] "No, actually, I don't."

Insight #1

Folks use social platforms not necessarily intended for news *to read the news*. They work around this!

Need: Methods of instilling trust (and care about trust) in disseminated news

Insight #2

Some people feel very passionately about the news and politics, and some just don't. Conversations are hard but potentially rewarding.

Need: Ways of approaching discussion with unlike-minded people

"I'm [politically] neutral."

"Democratic Party gives a little more shit about [equity for all], instead of just like blatantly disregarding the needs of people who actually require them."

"I don't care what you feel, just give me the numbers...I'll decide what I think."

"I lived in Washington for a while. And I guess like the people I was around was more of ... a demonstrating crowd. And whereas being back [in California] is mostly just about...keeping up on the news, as well as making sure you vote and whatnot."

"I knew [who I follow, i.e. academics] professionally. So I knew of their work professionally. And then I found them on Twitter, and then I followed them."

Insight #3

Having more people around you exposes you to more news. Communities are a catalyst.

Need: Communities of people to obtain quality news and discussion

Insight #4

Many people gravitate towards the “easiest” news they can find. Some still do care about the quality of it.

Need: Balance of quality and frictionless sources of news

“[I] follow like academics, like who have been published over the years without being particularly politically affiliated”

“American based media [is] far too biased interest and the incentive behind them being biased, it’s far too apparent for me.”

“Well, I don’t watch the news. So in that way, I’m more informed.”

Lingering Questions:

- Can news ever be unbiased? Should it be?
- To what extent is fostering connection within a like-minded network (e.g. friends) benefiting civic engagement; to what extent is it creating an echo chamber?

Summary

People need...

- Methods of instilling trust (and care about trust) in disseminated news
- Ways of approaching discussion with unlike-minded people
- Communities of people to obtain quality news and discussion
- Quality frictionless sources of news

Any questions?

Appendix:
Full Empathy Maps

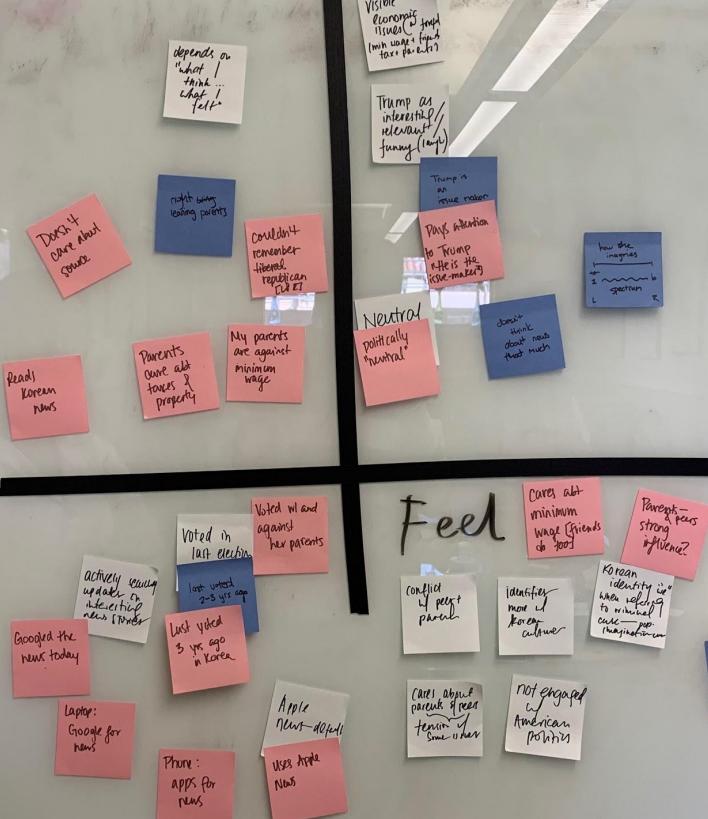
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not politically oriented

Think

Policies highest priority is economy (China in the 80s)

New as source of militancy

Perceives watching the news as being highly forward

case in writing situation

Contest new?

After not pol. oriented in US vs homelessness (local)

wanted to use to go see people & ground

Did not see this in pol. orientation in moments but same time

Non-religious divergence from target audience

Do

targeted -
Source

news source = Twitter
trust / need of pol. by persona

reads Twitter
for news ID's

Last time
Voting was held last
in 2011 [final]

Picked out
an academic journal
[clicked in]

Workaround
for Twitter's
not follow
only people I
know / like

read newspapers
and [click] and
Twitter

doesn't
have a
public
platform

community
building
to vote back
Cameron

Not much
Story telling

Feel

non /
technical /
dominated

Trusts someone
if they criticize
everyone

political affiliation
not dominate
from beginning

comparison
of other
countries,
disadvantage

disengagement
from → home
not connecting
of any kind
→ outside

interested
in economic
numbers

Led
its and
research

Expert view
of it not
same as
media gen

political climate
uncertain
to policy

policy
formed /
influenced
by others

"big loss"
trade policy

Rhetoric on
Change
Common
right wing

ability
to either
say
out things
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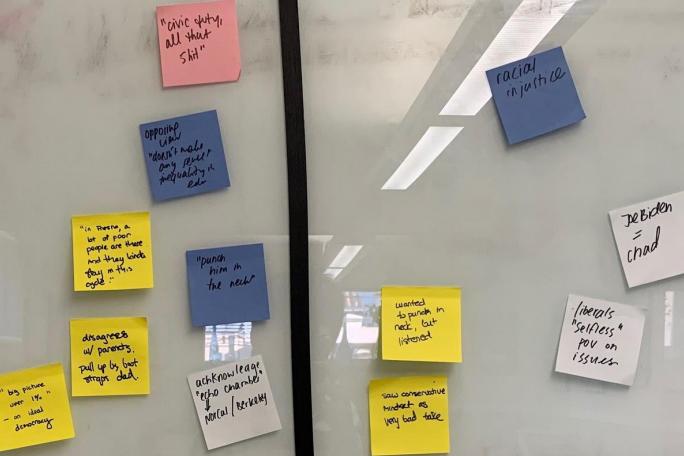
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Say

Think

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Feel



K

Say

"it hurts"
feels like
loss of sense
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"disturbing"
detention
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justice

"I feel
like my
body
is not
mine
but
keeping
up with
news"

"see my
body
keep up
with
news
etc."

"don't identify
with either
but seemed
liberal."

"if I want to
learn what's
happening
best is
to keep my
eyes open
and see it!"

Think

[Republican]
biasedly dirige
the news of
people who need
info?

TE orientation
from US view
of land to
Native perspective

Algorithmically
collected news
[news is
compiled]

bias in
news (America)
Wants fair
reporting
news be
fair & not
biased
journalistic

Chad +
white ignorant
white person
w/ good smile

detention
center
v.
prison

"what did you
get to that point
where you are
concerned about
your belief this
happened?"

Do

Used to be
a protester
in Washington
(los since moving
to CA)

political
activism
BDS

discuss politics
w/ friends

"I didn't get
to talk [while
visiting the
detention center]

Takes further
action
seek and
share
opinions

seek out
news for
a topic

joined club
to visit Tucson
detention
center

Volunteer
@ America's
Longest Detention
Center

environment
and physical
space (finishing
kind of
investment)

weak regions
more protest
oriented
here more keeping up

community
in political
movement

wants
normal fair
process

quit about
most deep
much need to
communicate
before

language
matter to her
helps to
communicate
directly at
beginning

Feel

CONTRADICTION:
Actively uses
aggressive language
but it's usually
not gets persecuted
or attribution

feels pessimistic
about issues

strongly about
fairness, equity

skeptical
about news
from news

positive @
agreement
politically

felt detention
center was
strongly biased

"I just learned
learned about
this morning.
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down."

Immigration

Appendix:
Stickies for Tensions,
Contradictions, Surprises

Tensions
M. tension between parents and peers
I. tension between knowing political facts but rejecting political rhetoric / affiliations
K. Moved back to California, was less involved with activism. Felt guilty about that
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Appendix:
Needfinding Plan & Discussion
Guide

Needfinding Plan

Team Research Focus

- Digital Democracy

Target Interviewees

- at least 3
- targeting new college grads
- Experts? if we can

Recruiting Plan

- go to downtown palo alto
- reaching out to friends too possibly

Logistics

We intend for our interviews to be about 15-20 minutes long. At least 2/3 members of the team will be present at each interview, with one leading the questioning/recording and at least one other observing/taking notes/documenting with images.

Discussion Guide

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today! We're building a project for a class; the project is centered around the theme of digital democracy. We're hoping to learn a little more about your views on ... If you are interested and willing, can you sign this waiver of consent? It says that we have your permission to use images and what you say...

Rapport

Broadening the scope

Narrowing in

Wrapping up

- Is there any thing you'd wish I'd ask / Is there anything that I should've asked?

Topics to cover

- Political activity and habits
- Voting
- Citizenship (good behaviors)

Specific Interview Questions

- Tell us about the last time you went to vote.* (narrate the process)
- What is the last political headline you remember seeing in the news? Did you do anything about it/share it?
- Do you have an established habit or routine for reading the news? If so, could you walk us through it?
- Walk me through how you inform yourself politically.
- Tell me about the last time you had a disagreement with someone politically.
- How do you decide to vote or not for a candidate? Why?
 - (watching a debate?)