

# Hoosier Youth Activist Project

**Students:** Christian Litsey, Laura Palomino, Priscilla Villarreal, and Victoria Gilles (IUPUC)

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Stephanie Serriere (IUPUC)

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to better understand the external --school and community based-- supports that Hoosier youth activists (ages 13-18) rely on and need to support their civic engagement. The term "civic engagement" encompasses a wide range of actions and behaviors that improve communities and help solve problems.

**Methodology:** Using survey and interview methods, this study has a particular focus on engagement for racial justice geographically, within the counties of Bartholomew, Brown, Decatur, Greene, Jackson, Jennings, Lawrence, Monroe and Owen. Currently, 14 youth have responded to the survey, and 7 have participated in follow-up interviews. Using the Development Assets Profile (DAP), this research seeks to measure the external supports youth have in their schools and communities. Another part of the survey measures youth civic efficacy.

## Theoretical Framework:

**Lived Civics:** Lived civics is the application of civics education that accommodates the lived experiences of youth, especially youth of color, as opposed to the traditional forms of civics education (Cohen, et al, 2018).

**Civic Access Points:** A location of civic engagement citizens can access (schools, libraries, city hall, the streets during protests and organizing, etc.) (Kershner & Geil, 2010).

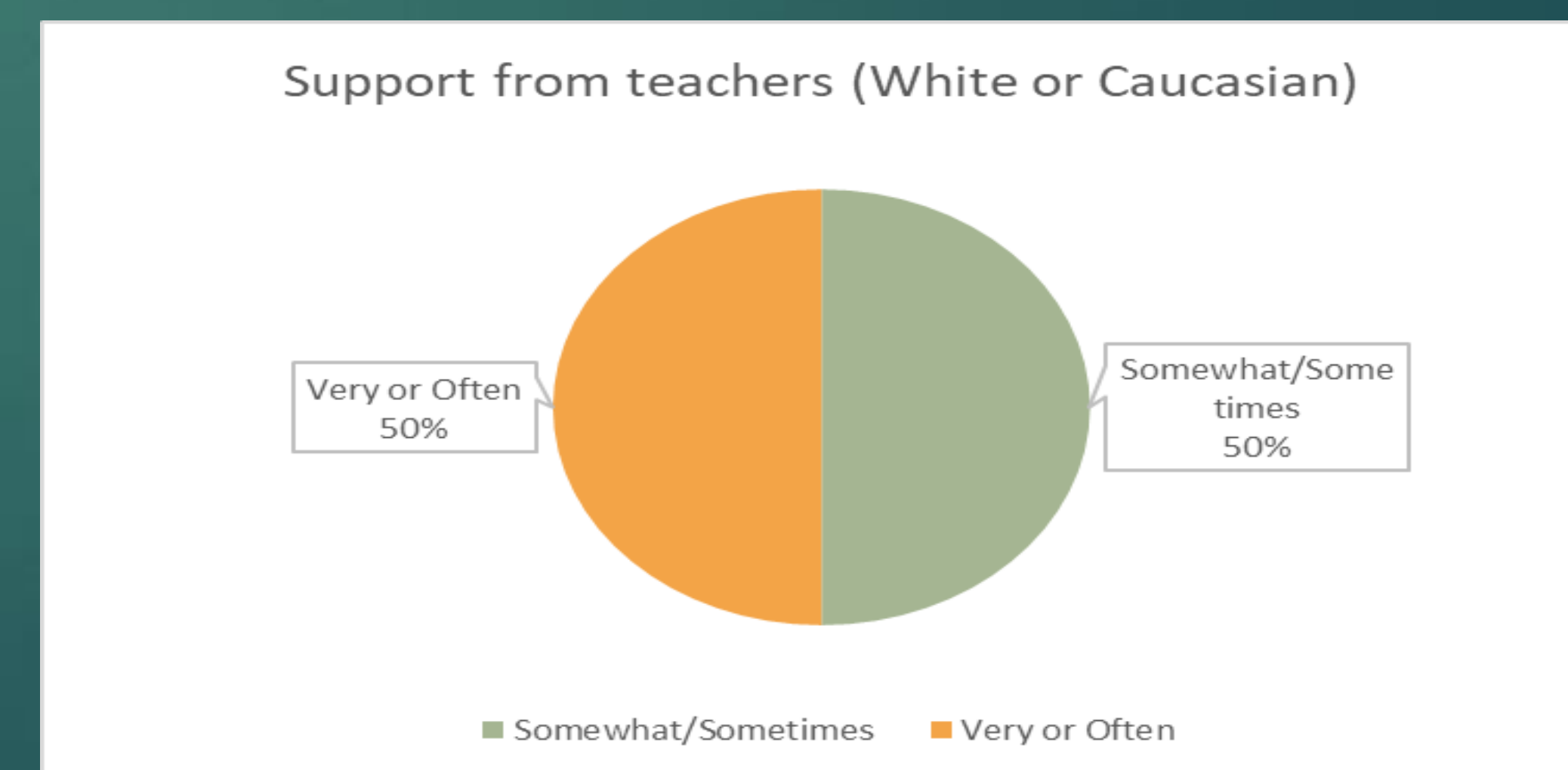
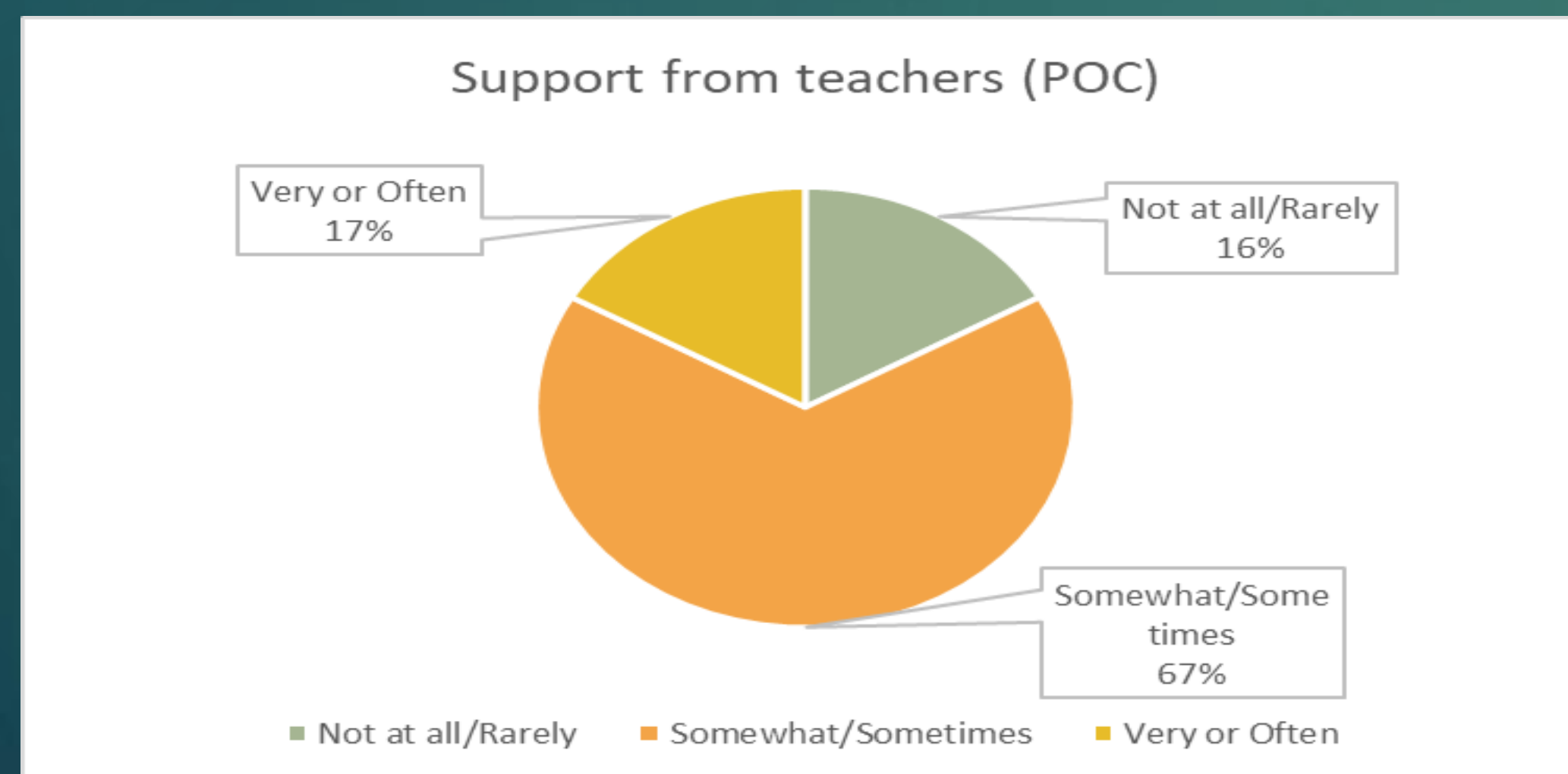
**Intersectionality:** A method of understanding privilege and discrimination based on various layers of identity a person can have (race, sexuality, gender, class, religion, etc.) (Crenshaw, 2015).

## Findings:

**Support from Teachers:** While White/Caucasian respondents all answered that they often or somewhat received support from teachers, only respondents of color gave responses stating they received no support and were more likely to respond with only rarely receiving support (See Figures Below). This sentiment is reflected in other questions and in interviews, with one student saying, "I don't really see any good reactions from my community."

**Desire to Engage:** Through interview analysis, we see that the support systems that the students have is mainly through their parents. Those interviewed also seemed to be those most interested in engaging in local civic activity in both involvement and leadership roles, wanting to participate in and organize clubs and groups to help others engage civically. This sentiment comes from a feeling that students are not receiving an accurate education of historical injustice and feeling like few adults in school and community settings are approachable from a social justice standpoint. This shows that while civic access points in schools and the community are lacking in terms of accessibility, there is desire on the part of student activists to engage regardless.

**Intersectionality as Access:** Another insight from these data is the impact of intersectionality on civic engagement. Youth's intersectional identities, in which they have been marginalized or dehumanized, served as an access point to their participation in larger civic actions. As one student said, "Society is kind of built against us as women, but especially as black women".



**References:** Cohen, C., Kahne, J., & Marshall, J. With Anderson, V., Brower, M., and Knight, D. (2018). Let's Go There: Race, Ethnicity, and a Lived Civics Approach to Civic Education. GenForward at the University of Chicago. Chicago, IL.

Blevins, B., LeCompte, K., & Wells, S. (2016). Innovations in Civic Education: Developing Civic Agency Through Action Civics. *Theory & Research in Social, 44*(3), 344-384. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2016.1203853>

Crenshaw, K. (2015, October 15). Kimberlé Crenshaw Discusses 'Intersectional Feminism' [Interview by 1296097969 954478312 S. Hayet]. Retrieved April 7, 2021, from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROwquxC\\_Gxc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROwquxC_Gxc)

Kershner, B., & Geil, K. (2010). "I'm about to really bring it!" Access Points between Youth Activists and Adult Community Leaders. *Children, Youth and Environments, 20*(2), 1-24. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7721/chilyoutenvi.20.2.0001>