THE DEMOCRATIC FIELD 01

SUMMARY REPORT AND ANALYSIS

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THE DEMOCRATIC FIELD

EDITION 01
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SUMMARY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

In the following pages, we present post-analysis reports on several
aspects of the first edition of "The Democratic Field," an art-based
'civic intervention' that uses the unique 'literacies' of actor-
researchers to give voice to and/or embody other people in order to
examine the effects of implicit biases on our political perceptions
and preferences.

Inspired by the challenge of sorting between the large number of
candidates for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, and the
televised debates featuring so many identities, policies, personas,
and narratives, we sought a way to separate voters' experiences of
these different elements, without preferencing one over another.

Using the capacities of Verbatim Performance Lab performing artists,
we wanted to create an experiment in the separation of speech,
identity, persona, and policy, and then a re-assembly of these aspects
in an audience's awareness, to heighten their critical recognition of
each of these elements in their political decision-making.

EVENT DESCRIPTION
The performance event itself is quite simple: it is a theatrical
'table read' featuring 10 actors trained to read a 'scored' transcript
of one candidate's policy position on two different issues. In the
first edition, the issues we selected were Gender/Reproductive Rights
and Immigration. The 'scoring' process refers to a way of preparing a
transcript of a video clip using spacing, marks, and edits on paper to
enable the actor to recreate the cadence, breath, pace, and 'essence'
of the original delivery. Additionally, the transcripts are
anonymized, removing any specific references – gender, geography, etc
– that might clearly identify the candidate who is speaking. These
are either redacted or replaced with neutral wording.

After an introduction by the facilitator, the audience is asked to
place a ranked-choice vote for the candidate in the race that they are
currently leaning toward. The actors are then introduced and allowed
to randomly choose a letter, A through J, and are given a
corresponding folder containing two scored transcripts, each
containing a single candidate's policies. They're given five minutes

to review the transcripts, while the verbatim method is described for the audience.

After taking seats corresponding to their letters at a long table, the actors then 'voice' the statements, first all of them on one issue, and then all on the second, without interruption. Audience members have been provided with a worksheet that allows them to organize notes and responses to the readings as they listen. Following the reading, guided by the facilitator, they are then allowed to finish making their notes, and then a second vote is taken: which actor/candidate would they select as their top choice for the nomination.

Then begins the talkback — a structured dialogue between facilitators, audience, and performers — that interrogates people's experience of the event, their perceptions, preferences, and experience of change. First, the audience is asked to discuss among themselves their reactions and their guesses about which candidate is which. Then as a group the audience is asked for their most positive or most negative responses. They are also asked for their guesses on which candidates were which. By now the votes have been counted, and we reveal to the audience (and the performers) who was voicing who. With this new information, we open the discussion to general comments and responses. Just like the table read itself, the talkback is video recorded, and the footage will be logged and processed as a part of the qualitative data capture.

ARTISTS' LITERACIES INSTITUTE/ VERBATIM PERFORMANCE LAB

MISINFORMATION, PERCEPTION, AND POLICY IN THE 2020 DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

An Art-based Civic Intervention

ALI and VPL are collaborating on an experiment in information sharing/ knowledge production that separates policy from spectacle, by providing a theatrical 'table read' of the 10 leading Democratic candidates' policy platforms — disembodied from their name, their personae, and their image.

Contemporary presidential politics are complicated by the domination of information conveyance through unregulated, easily manipulated digital/visual media. Narratives constructed in the chaos of public perception overwhelm discussion of actual policy, and we have seen already what happens when an under-informed populace, fed by unsourced propaganda from all sides and unequipped for the critical resilience needed to sort through what is real and what isn't, then votes in primary and general elections.

At an evening-long event open to the public, 10 VPL actors will read directly from the candidates' policy statements on 3 different key issues, and the audience will have no other indication of which 'candidate' is speaking. This table-read will be followed by a facilitated discourse with the audience, that will interrogate their perceptions, understandings, and misperceptions. We'll follow this discourse with a mock vote by the audience; and then finally with a presentation by each candidate on one of the *false, misleading,* or *distracting narratives* already being disseminated about them online and in the media, to see if people might change their vote as a result.

Our goals are to test a model of civic discourse built around the unique **ways of knowing** that art generates, in the hopes that it is scalable and replicable in the coming year of campaigning; to develop a way to understand and even interrupt the destructive or purely spectacle-based narratives that now emerge organically from our new information landscape; and to study public perception and misperception, in order to develop art-based methods for meaningful critical reflection, and to be able to inoculate the population from misinformation campaigns and allow people to vote according to informed beliefs and interests.

(Proposal text, May 2019)

THE DEMOCRATIC FIELD - SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

In a 2017 report by the Helicon Collaborative, *Mapping the Landscape of Socially Engaged Artistic Practice*, researchers Alexis Frasz and Holly Sidford outline nine variations in socially engaged processes. Finding the placement of an artwork along this series of spectrum is important to understanding how it can exist meaningfully and ethically within systems and communities. Artists' Literacies Institute routinely produces such an engagement map for its projects to provide context for its work. "The Democratic Field" is categorized on the following pages using this method.

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT
(from social aesthetics to fine arts aesthetics)

SOCIAL		FINE ARTS

TDF is non-theatrical, highly social, and the aesthetic output largely takes place in the words and responses of the audience-participants, as opposed to the actors themselves.

ROLE / FUNCTION OF THE ARTIST
(from artist as facilitator of a co-creative process to the primary creative agent)

FACILITATOR		CREATIVE AGENT

In the first portion of the event, the actors in the table-read function as creative agents, and the audience 'facilitates' their read through attention and the intention to vote, as well as their notetaking. In the second half of every event, ALI provides a facilitator to lead the audience in structured discussion and the audience discourse serves as the creative output.

DEFINITION OF THE "WORK"
(from the process as "the work" to a final product as "the work")

PROCESS		PRODUCT

There is a minimal theatrical experience to The Democratic Field. Much more prevalent is the process of the table read, the process for the actors of discovering and voicing the anonymized candidates, and the working notes and followup responses of the audience-participants. This process is an ongoing one of the discovery of implict bias in oneself and the nature of our political preferences and perceptions.

ORIGIN OF THE ARTIST
(from being from the community to never having been there before)

ROOTED IN		FROM OUTSIDE

We are all participants in the spectacle democracy that this work explores. To date, the project has also focused on audiences on the left side of the political spectrum (by its very nature in focusing on the Democratic primaries), with which we also identify. As it progresses, we intend on connecting to more ideologically mixed audiences and introducing more diverse political statements, and this will shift our role from insider to a more centered or outside position.

ORIGINATION OF THE WORK
(from generated within the community itself to generated by an artist based outside the community)

COMMUNITY GENERATED		OUTSIDE GENERATED

The community - that is the voting audience/participants - generates the knowledge, the notes, the preferences that comprise the work. The actors, from 'outside' the audience in so far as they are performing their part in the event and not there as 'themselves', are in this case instruments for mirroring the biases of the audience. The knowledge is of and by the local community.

PLACE
(from work that is inseparable from a particular place to work that is not geographically specific)

PLACE SPECIFIC		NON-PLACE SPECIFIC

We are dealing with national politics in a highly flexible and adaptable way from locale to locale. The method is also adaptable to any cultural milieu, especially where media spectacle has shaped public perceptions and social conditioning has instilled implicit biases, and these biases then inform political choices.

ISSUE
(from single-issue focus to addressing multiple issues)

SINGLE ISSUE		MULTI-ISSUE

In some sense, the single issue at stake is implicit bias - but these biases are malleable and change shape depending on the related political issue being discussed. In this way, it is a multi-issue project, so far exploring the impact of bias on views of climate change, gender/reproductive rights, immigration, and healthcare - and poised to explore many social issues as they emerge in the political debates of the coming campaign year.

DURATION
(from a one-time project to a commitment over many years)

SHORT TERM		LONG TERM

This specific formulation of the method is developed to function throughout the coming campaign year. Beyond that, it remains a valuable method to engage with other manifestations of politics, social debate, and the role of implicit bias in shaping our political preferences.

DIRECTION OF INFLUENCE
(from directed inward to serve the community itself to directed outward to reach others)

INWARD		OUTWARD

While we as creative practitioners learn an enormous amount with each event, by far the predominant influence is on the audiences self-awareness and criticality. We have seen this expand outward through audience sharing of their experiences and revelations with friends and social connections. We intend the production of summaries, visualizations, and reports from each event to reinforce and codify this outward learning.

EVENT OVERVIEW — What Happened

Our audience identified itself through the initial straw poll, a
ranked-choice poll in which they were prompted to list their top two
choices, currently, for the Democratic nomination. Elizabeth Warren
lead this poll, followed by Bernie Sanders.

First poll results — Pre-reading
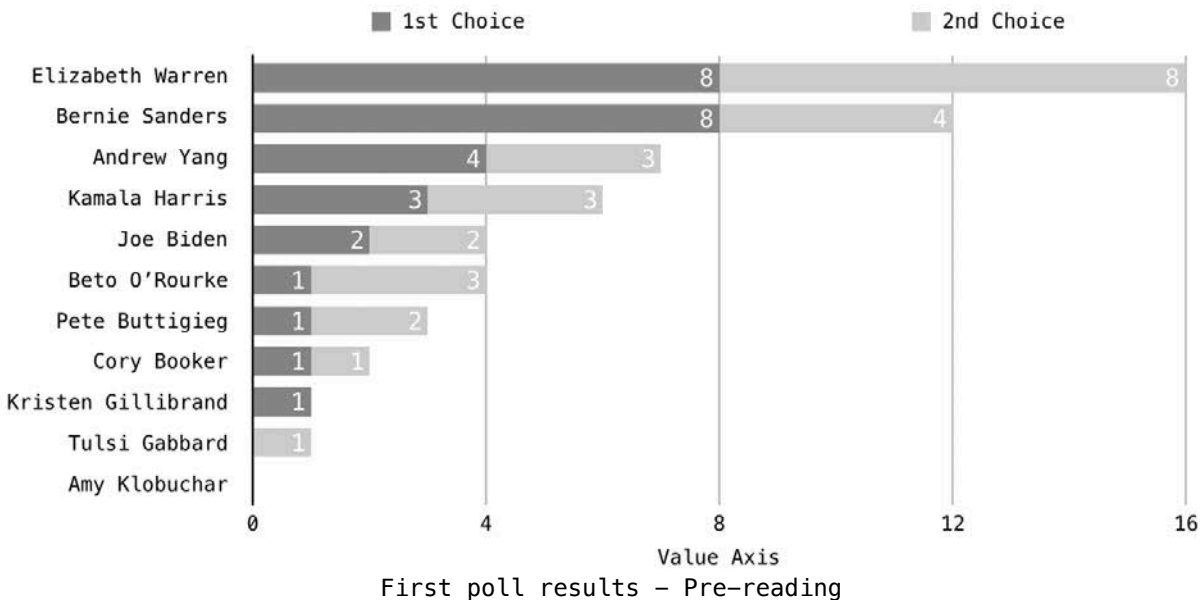
The transcripts were then handed out to the performers, and the
Democratic Field appeared as below — without the audience or
performers yet knowing who was whom.
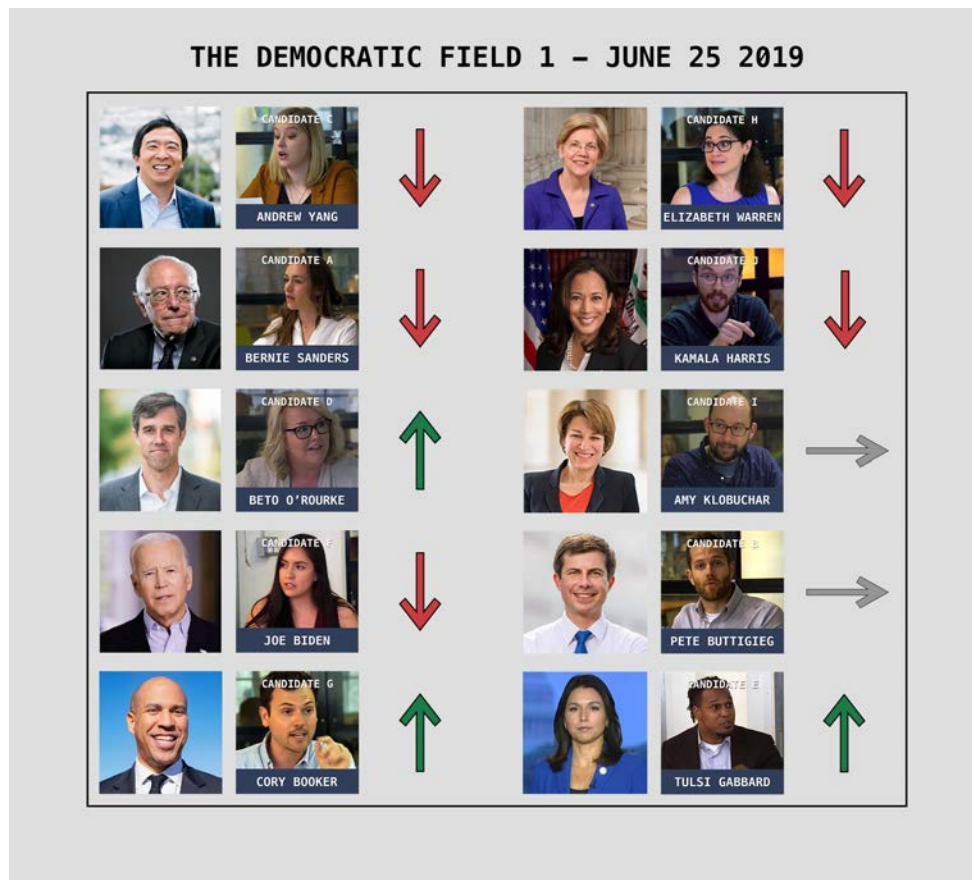

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The table read was then conducted, on Immigration and Gender/
Reproductive Rights, and a second poll was taken.
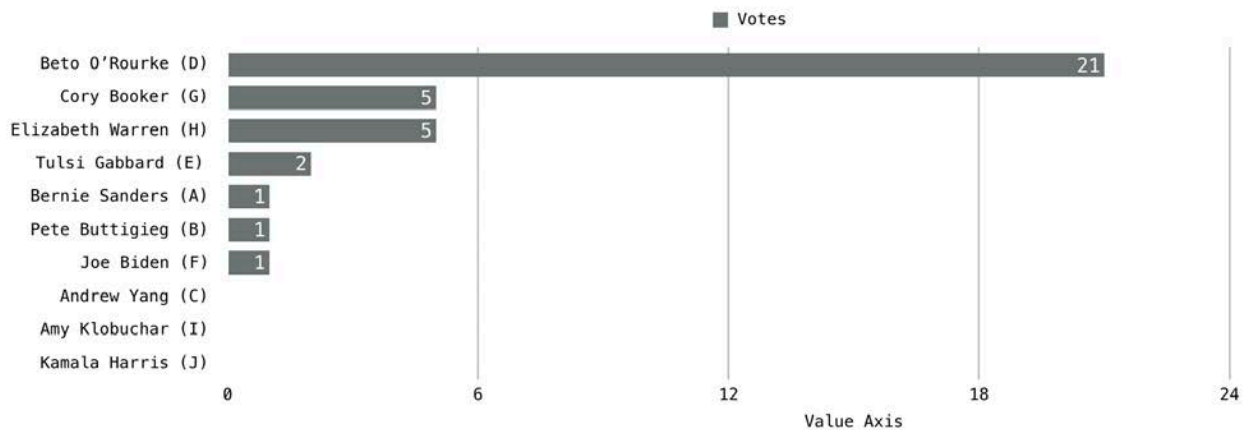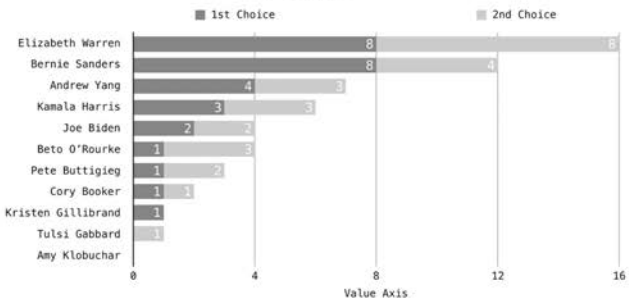

Second poll result — Post-reading

Thus we saw significant movement from multiple candidates vis-a-vis
their policy statements as read by the actors. The following pages
will examine each candidate's trajectory more closely, and examine the
qualitative layers of information gathered from the audience
worksheets and video recording of the talkback.
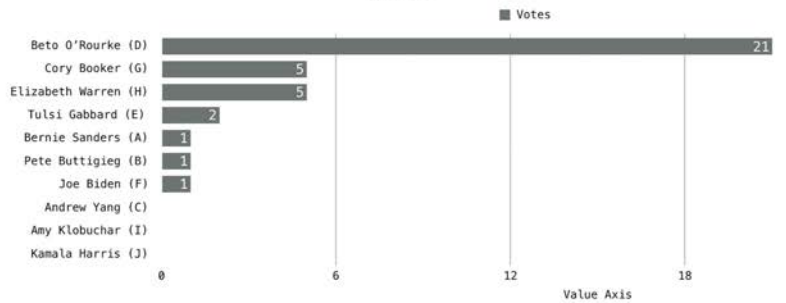
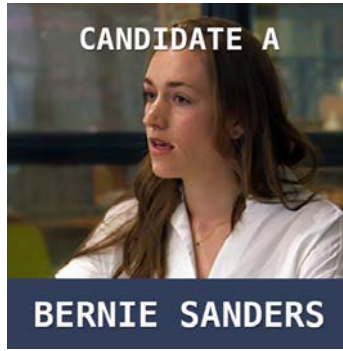# INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATE TRAJECTORIES

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CANDIDATE A — BERNIE SANDERS
CANDIDATE B — PETE BUTTIGIEG
CANDIDATE C — ANDREW YANG
CANDIDATE D — BETO O'ROURKE
CANDIDATE E — TULSI GABBARD
CANDIDATE F — JOE BIDEN
CANDIDATE G — CORY BOOKER
CANDIDATE H — ELIZABETH WARREN
CANDIDATE I — AMY KLOBUCHAR
CANDIDATE J — KAMALA HARRIS

ENTRY

■ 1st Choice   ■ 2nd Choice

Candidate	1st Choice	2nd Choice
Elizabeth Warren	8	8
Bernie Sanders	8	4
Andrew Yang	4	3
Kamala Harris	3	3
Joe Biden	2	2
Beto O'Rourke	1	3
Pete Buttigieg	1	2
Cory Booker	1	1
Kristen Gillibrand	1	
Tulsi Gabbard		1
Amy Klobuchar		

Value Axis

EXIT

■ Votes

Candidate	Votes
Beto O'Rourke (D)	21
Cory Booker (G)	5
Elizabeth Warren (H)	5
Tulsi Gabbard (E)	2
Bernie Sanders (A)	1
Pete Buttigieg (B)	1
Joe Biden (F)	1
Andrew Yang (C)	
Amy Klobuchar (I)	
Kamala Harris (J)	

Value Axis

VOTE 1 (Taken on Entry): **8** First Choice, **4** Second Choice (2nd place)

VOTE 2 (Taken after Reading): **1** (T— 4th Place)

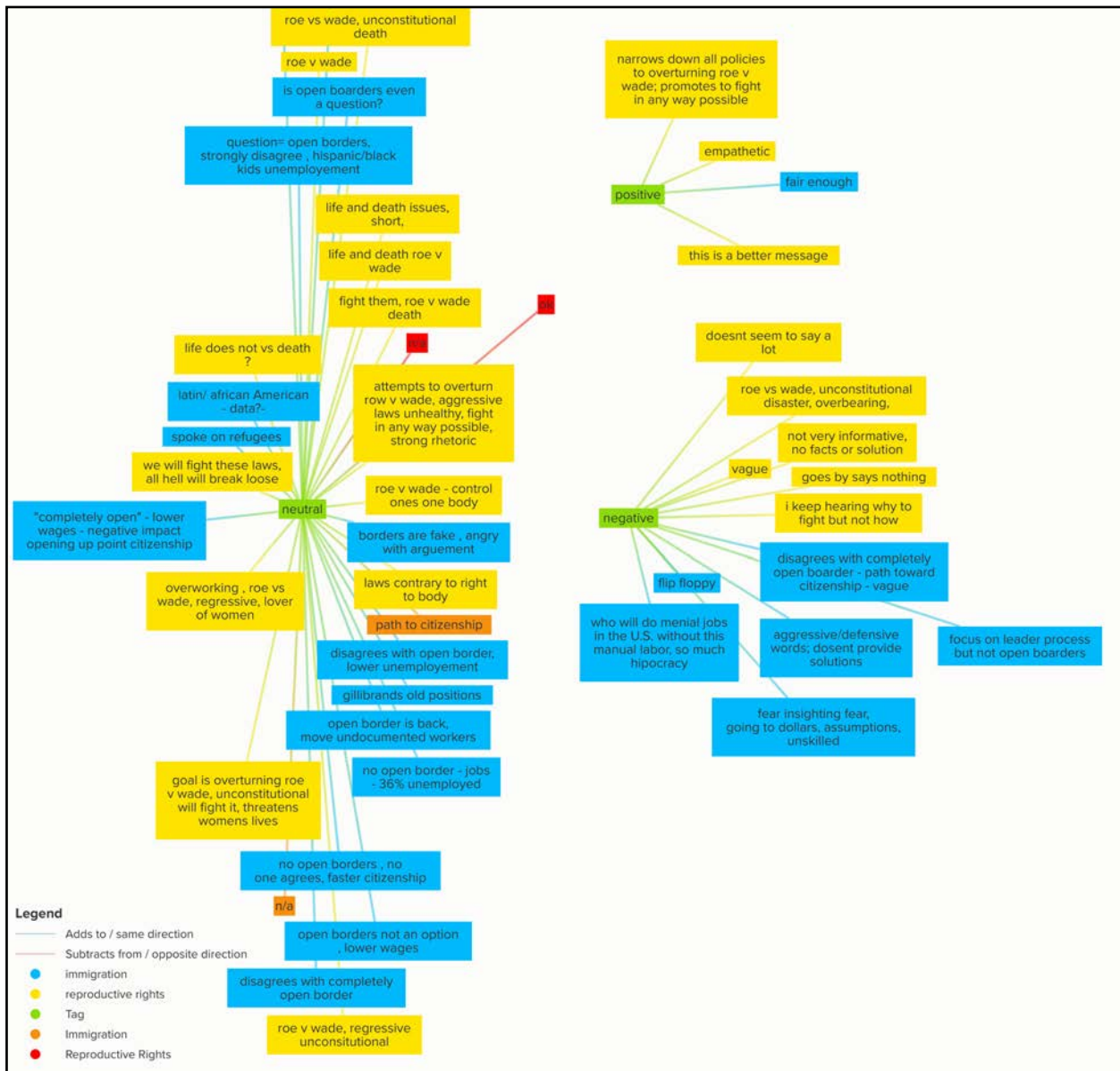Chart of all Audience Worksheet Comments, connected by Positive/ Negative/ Neutral tag, color coded to Issue

Bernie Sanders/ Candidate A

Summary narrative:
Sanders/A was among the audience's preferred candidates coming in to the event, tying for the lead in first choice votes, and coming in 2nd in second choice, with 12 total participants listing him on their ballot. Following the table-read, where he was embodied by a white female in her late 20s, Sanders/A only received a single vote.

Immigration: Well Wuh You gotta be careful about defining the word immigrants. What they are talking about is completely opening up the border. That was the question. Should we have a completely open border so that anybody can come into the United States of America If that were to happen which I strongly disagree with there is no question in my mind that that would substantially lower wages in this country. When you have thirty-six percent of Hispanic kids in this country who can't find jobs and you bring a lot of unskilled workers into this country what do you think happens to that thirty-six percent of kids Who are today unemployed? Fifty-one percent of African-American kids. I don't think there's any candidate for president none who thinks that we should open up the borders and not see that As having a negative impact. So, to my mind is what do we do and how do we address the problem of eleven million undocumented people in this country today We move aggressively toward a path toward citizenship. We move as fast as we can to legal status. We provide protection for those people. But to simply open the borders of America. Do you think there is any candidate who who thinks that that makes sense? I don't think so.

Gender/Reproductive Rights: "Are we gonna go back to the days of back alley abortions women died before we had Roe v. Wade in place and so I'm gonna tell you on this issue I'm kinda done because here's how I feel about it guys. Lemme tell you cause here's the thing there are states that keep passing these laws and so and when elected I'm gonna put in place and require that states that have a history of passing legislation that is designed to to prevent or or limit a woman's access to reproductive health care that those laws have to come before my Department of Justice for a review and approval and until we determine that they are constitutional they will not take effect."

IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK: Notes taken by the audience on Sanders/A were mostly neutral/ negative, with the negativity directed in equal measure between immigration and reproductive rights. On reproductive rights Candidate A was "vague" and had "no facts or solution" while delivering in an "overbearing" way. On immigration the negative feedback also included vagueness and 'doesn't provide solutions,' but also has some harsher responses, calling the statement 'hypocrisy,' 'flip-floppy,' and 'fear inciting fear.' The positive notes were mostly on reproductive rights, where one attendee noted down 'empathetic', another says 'this is a better message' (though it's not clear what it's better *than*). Only one note on immigration was positive, simply granting the presentation was 'fair enough.'
   Additionally, in analysis of the post-reading discussion, Candidate A/Sanders was mentioned one time, in response to the prompt 'What did you not like/ What turns you off to a candidate?" One attendee, who described herself as a Bernie voter and who selected him in the entry poll, stated that "(she) was shocked that Sanders was saying things like 'unskilled' and that immigration equated to ethnicity. This was shocking to me, to hear these buzzwords, codewords, like 'they take more jobs.'"

Interpretation:
Transformed from a highly recognizable white male to an unfamiliar young white female, we see Sanders/A plummet from a near first place finish to only receiving a single vote, while also receiving significant negative feedback from a perceived position on immigration that was more conservative/ xenophobic than the preference of this audience.

Is recognizability a liability for Candidate A, as evidenced by Bernie supporters being 'shocked' that they couldn't spot their favorite and had actually rated him poorly when his words were anonymized? It also seems evident that some aspect or combination of youth, whiteness, femaleness cost Candidate A votes, among those who had indicated a preference for Sanders at the beginning. One question raised in this experiment may be that a candidate with high celebrity recognition is not listened to with as much criticality, and in fact their words, stripped from their persona and put into a certain body, may be interpreted with additional harshness.
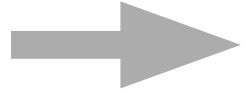
VOTE 1 (Taken on Entry): **1** First Choice, **2** Second Choice (7th place)

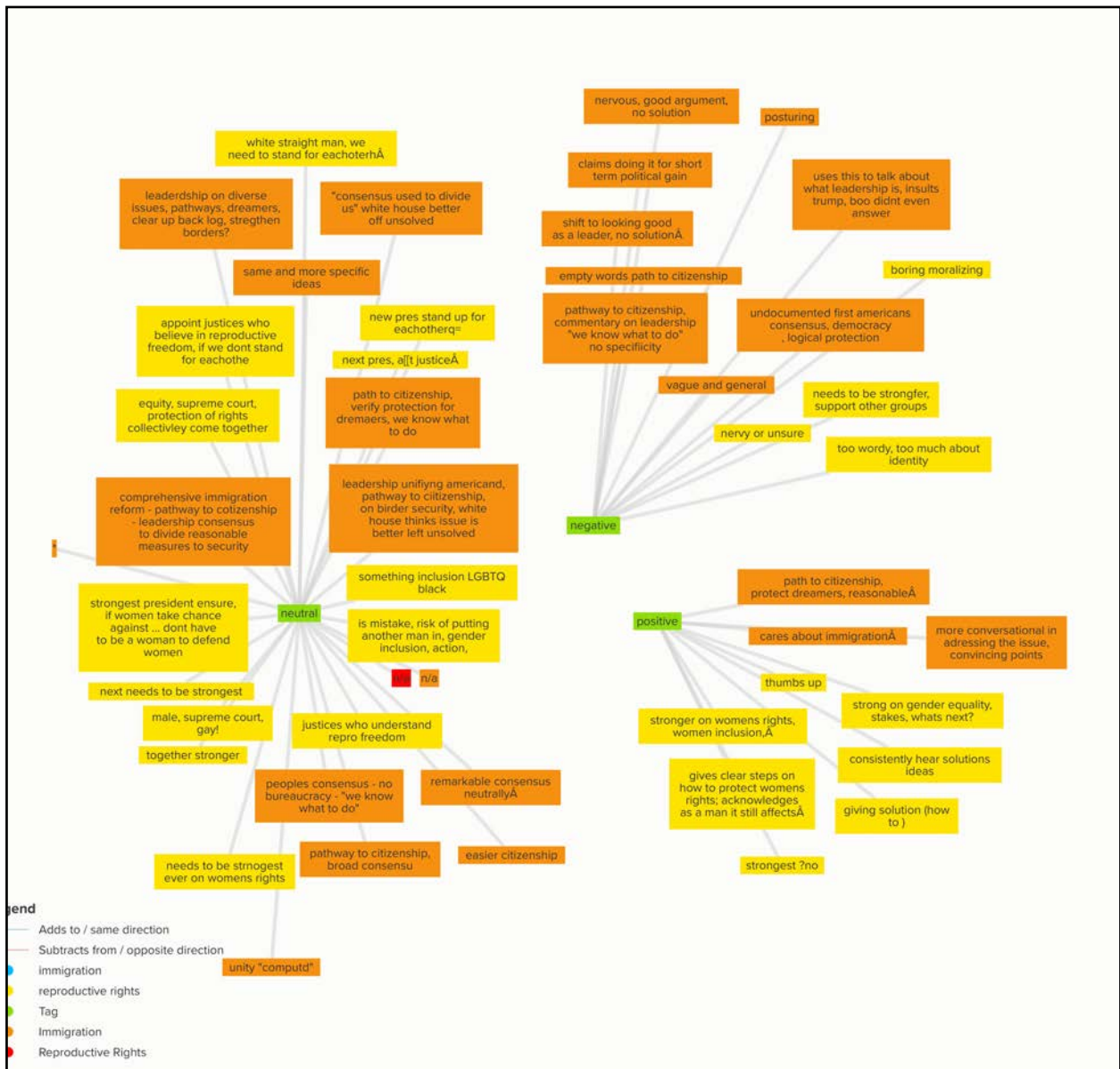VOTE 2 (Taken after Reading): **1** (T- 4th Place)

Chart of all Audience Worksheet Comments, connected by Positive/ Negative/ Neutral tag, color coded to Issue

Pete Buttigieg/ Candidate B

Summary Narrative:
Buttigieg/B received a single 1st place and 2 second place votes,
which put him in the middle of the pack in terms of this audience's
initial preference. In the table read, Buttigieg – a white male in
his 30s – was embodied by *another* white male in his 30s, and it is
consistent with the experiment that perceptions of him/his candidacy
shifted very little.

Immigration: We can't have comprehensive immigration reform that works
unless it addresses the status for those eleven some million
undocumented immigrants. So what we need to do is make sure there's a
pathway to citizenship for them too uh uh things that's that's
incredibly frustrating about this to me is that there's actually broadly
an American consensus on what we're supposed to do about this. You know
leadership is supposed to be about taking issues that are very divisive
and somehow finding a way to unify Americans around that. Th–that's how
a good president uh earns her or his paycheck. But right now we have an
issue where there's actually a pretty broad consensus and has been used
to divide us. It's it's actually remarkable feat of whatever the
opposite of leadership is a pathway to citizenship for uh undocumented
people in this country. A level of protection for Dreamers a set of
reforms to clear up the bureaucracy and the backlogs in the lawful
immigration system and reasonable measures on border security. We know
what to do. It's just that we don't have the leadership in Washington to
do to do it and I'm afraid one of the reasons is we've got a White House
that has actually computed that it is better off politically if this
problem goes unsolved so that Americans can cu–continue to be divided
around it for short–term political gain and that has got to end with the
new president.

Gender/ Reproductive Rights: The next president needs to be the
strongest president ever on women's rights and equality and gender
inclusion. Especially if American women are gonna take a chance on
putting a man in again. and so step one uh appoint justices who
understand that freedom includes reproductive freedom. Uh so for
starters that's how we begin and this is a really important issue that's
obviously right now we're seeing it uh in in such an alarming fashion.
Uh it's showing what the stakes are and h– why these elections matter.
And we have to we have to recognize that if we don't all stand up for
each other uh uh we don't know whose rights are going to be on the
chopping block next. So uh I don't have to be a woman to be ready to
stand full–throated at the side of women uh fighting for autonomy just
like you don't have to be gay to be able to defend gay marriage and we
don't have to be Black to point to uh racism in the criminal justice
system. All of us are in this together.

IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK: The audience notes taken during the event were balanced,
but interestingly Buttigieg/B received among the *least neutral* comments –
viewers took an active position on this candidate at a higher rate than any
others. Negative notes edged out positive ones; and he scored more
negatively on immigration, while getting the most positive notes on gender/
reproductive rights. On immigration, the positions are described as
"posturing," "vague and general," "nervous," and received a "boo – didn't
even answer". "Nervy and unsure" returns in negative feedback on

reproductive rights, as well as being "too wordy." That said, the positive notes on reproductive rights credited Candidate B as being "stronger," "clear," "consistent," and citing "solutions" and "clear steps."
    In the post-reading discussion with the audience, Candidate B was singled out for criticism of politicians who "spent most of the time saying nothing."

Interpretation:
The randomizing process in this case returned a result where we could see what the effect, if any, embodying a candidate with the same body type/identity might have. In effect, it might be seen as a kind of control case, to test the verbatim embodiment method effects all on its own, without identity variables. The consistency of perception/ response from before the event to after suggests that people's perceptions/opinions on Pete Buttigieg's candidacy were not affected by the disembodiment from his specific persona into that of a like identity. Requiring further testing, this is at the moment a positive result in support of the utility of the method.

VOTE 1 (Taken on Entry): **4** First Choice, **3** Second Choice (3rd place)

VOTE 2 (Taken after Reading): **0** (T— 5th/last Place)
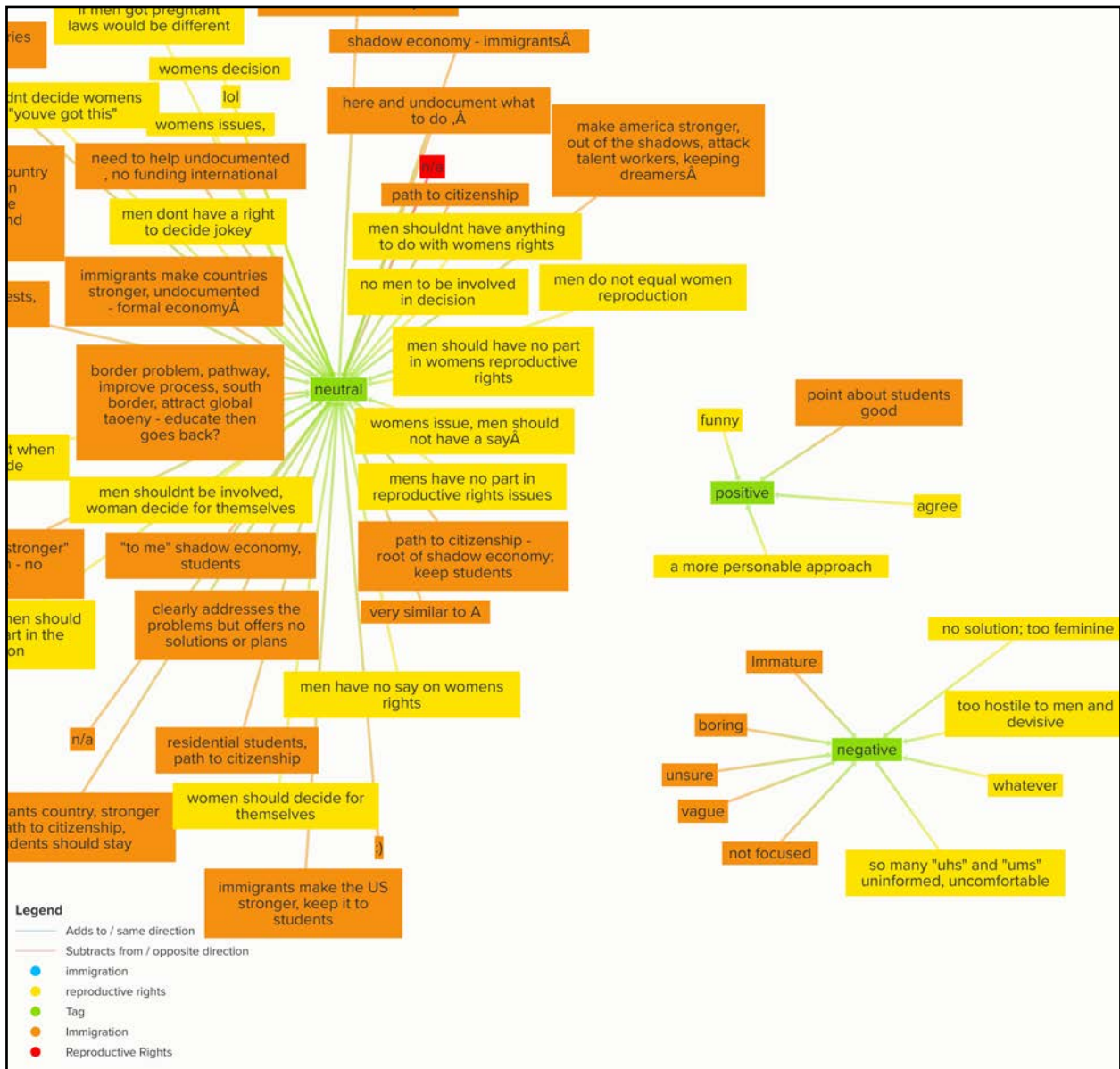

Chart of all Audience Worksheet Comments, connected by Positive/ Negative/ Neutral tag, color coded to Issue

Andrew Yang/ Candidate C

<u>Summary Narrative:</u>
Yang/C was a popular choice among this audience coming in to the event, placing 3rd in the first poll. After being embodied by a white woman in her late 20s, all of that support evaporated, and Candidate C received no votes.

>**Immigration:**So on the immigration system I know that immigrants make our country stronger.Uhm to me we need to create a path to citizenship for people who are here and undocumented. There're over 12 million people who are here and undocumented many of them are paying taxes and have American children and having them in the shadow economy is bad for everyone. It's bad for them. It's bad for the entire country. So we need to bring those people out of the shadows into the formal economy and have a long term path to citizenship even while uh trying to improve our current intake system enforce the southern border and make it so that we can attract talented workers from around the world. One example is it makes no sense to bring students in to our universities give them degrees and then send them away to compete against us. If you're an international student who studies in this country and you get a degree uh we should be tryin' to keep you.
>
>**Gender/Reproductive Rights:** So I don't think men should have anything to do with deciding uh women's reproductive issues. Nah it's like -- eh like, we all know that if men got pregnant laws would be very, very different. Uhm and so I think- I think that men should just be like, you've got this and then leave. And I have a feeling I know what women would decide. But it should be up to women to decide for themselves.

<u>Immediate Feedback:</u> Attendee notes taken during the event used mostly neutral language, showing that in the moment there weren't strong responses for or against Candidate C. Of those notes that expressed a judgement or position, most were negative, with a fairly even balance of negative responses on immigration and gender/reproductive rights. On immigration, the statements were deemed 'boring,' 'immature,' and 'vague/ not focused;' while interestingly for this male candidate, his statements on gender/reproductive rights were tagged as 'too hostile to men and divisive,' and also 'too feminine.' There was only one positive note made about immigration, that the candidate made one 'point about students' that was 'good'. On gender/reproductive rights Candidate C was 'funny,' 'more personable,' and a notetaker wrote that they 'agree.' While positive, none of these are overwhelmingly strong endorsements.

<u>Interpretation:</u> Yang's public persona as an outsider bringing exciting new ideas to the campaign had evidently captured the enthusiasm of a fair proportion of this audience, but without the ability to discuss those specific economic positions, and his recognizability as a (the only) young Asian-American man in the race, his candidacy suffered. Is recognizability/persona a liability here as in Sanders/A? To some extent the femaleness of the actor became a liability as well, where Yang's stated position on gender rights was perceived not as allyship but rather as a forceful claim by a woman for reproductive autonomy — evidently an unappealing position for this audience.

VOTE 1 (Taken on Entry): **1** First Choice, **3** Second Choice (T — 5th place)

VOTE 2 (Taken after Reading): **21** (1st Place)

Chart of all Audience Worksheet Comments, connected by Positive/ Negative/ Neutral tag, color coded to Issue

Beto O'Rourke/ Candidate D

Summary Narrative:
O'Rourke was in the middle of the pack for this audience coming in, primarily as a second choice – only one voter listed him as their first choice. Then something remarkable happened: after being embodied by a 52 year old white woman, Candidate D became the *overwhelming* top choice of the evening, receiving over four times as many votes as the next closest candidate.

Immigration: We saw 400,000 apprehensions at our southern border last year to put that in perspective in the second year of the George W. Bush administration there were 1.6 million apprehensions. And those that we were apprehending last year very often came from the Northern Triangle countries of Central America. And they were fleeing the deadliest places on the planet and making a 2000 mile journey much of that by foot some of it atop a train known as The Beast or La Bestia to come here in an attempt to follow our asylum laws. We met those asylum seekers under this administration with cages for their kids and we've deported those mothers who risked their very lives to bring their children here back to the very countries from which they fled. You ask what I would do differently? I would never again separate another family when they come here at their most vulnerable and desperate moments. And I will make every effort and we will spare no expense to reunite those families who have already been separated. And then let's do this together and let's not do it as Democrats or independents or Republicans. But let's do this as Americans. Let's rewrite our immigration laws in our own image. Let's reflect our values our reality uh the best interests and traditions of this country that is comprised of immigrants and asylum seekers and refugees. Free every one of the more than 1 million Dreamers from any fear of deportation by making them US citizens here in there home country. And then give others who are laboring in the shadows right now working some of the toughest jobs that we can imagine let's bring them out of the shadows allow them to contribute to their full potential put them on a path to citizenship and then ensure that our visa quotas match the labor demands that we have here our desire to have families be able to reunite and have everyone contribute to the shared greatness and success of this country. I know that we can do it. We just have to set our minds to it and have a president who reflects that desire and that demand.

Reproductive Rights: For so long women have been leading this fight shouldering the burden of making sure that their reproductive rights are protected. It's time that all of us join them in this fight. As President, I will make sure that every nominee to every federal bench including the Supreme Court understands and believes that the 1973 decision Roe versus Wade is the settled law of the land. As as President I'll make sure that we do away with the gag rule which prevents providers from referring women to get the best reproductive health care that they can. We'll do away with the Hyde Amendment so that ensures that regardless of your income or your zip code you're able to access a safe legal abortion and also the other services that are provided in family planning clinics a cervical cancer screening family planning help. And then I will work with our partners in Congress to make sure that by statute we prevent states from taking away the right that every

woman should enjoy making her own decisions about her own body and
having access to the healthcare that makes that possible.

Immediate Feedback:
Notes taken during the reading — those which weren't neutral — leaned
toward positive positions, and those slightly favoring the statements
on immigration. The four negative notes were equally balanced between
the two issues: on immigration, Candidate D was charged with 'using
empathy and shaming' and 'relying on widespread emotional responses;
on gender/reproductive rights Candidate D 'seems a little
confrontational.' It's notable that some of these same qualities were
framed as positive responses. On immigration: "strong, played on
emotion, knowledgeable," "emotional narrative, empathy," "moral,
noble," "smooth and passionate," and one notetaker confessed the
policy statement was "sentimental, and I agree".
     In the recorded discussion, one member of the audience said that
overall there was "so little policy discussed, *except* for Candidate D.
I think Candidate D must be Elizabeth Warren." (To which a voice in
the room responded "You *hope* it's Elizabeth Warren!") Another
audience member rehashed the recurring theme about D: "Candidate D
expressed empathy, and themes that really resonated with me."
Following the reveal, one more mentioned how "O'Rourke was a good
storyteller, and empathetic" and that this ability with narrative
"made me think this must be a minority candidate."

Interpretation:
The balance of positive/negative notes — although it was leaning
positive — doesn't fully anticipate the overwhelming vote count for
Candidate D. What's more interesting is the *nature* of those notes:
overwhelmingly talking about empathy, emotion, storytelling, and how
these then blur into a sense of knowingness and relatability.
     We know from the first poll that a large number of the audience
were *looking for Elizabeth Warren* as their stated prefernece and in
the body of this actor, they saw the closest resemblance in the room.
The actress herself notes, in a followup survey, "I think my age and
gender played a role in the final result. I believe I was the oldest
actor. The participant who wanted me to be Elizabeth Warren really
only had one body that was close to fitting that description, mine."
This strongly suggests that voters, even with their critical senses
heightened, can be powerfully persuaded by the presence of the *right
kind of body/identity*. Did most of the audience then fail to really
hear through the words, or did this particular audience hold a biased
view of O'Rourke's 'empathetic' positions based on his white maleness?

VOTE 1 (Taken on Entry): **0** First Choice, **1** Second Choice (T – 8th place)

VOTE 2 (Taken after Reading): **2** (4th Place)
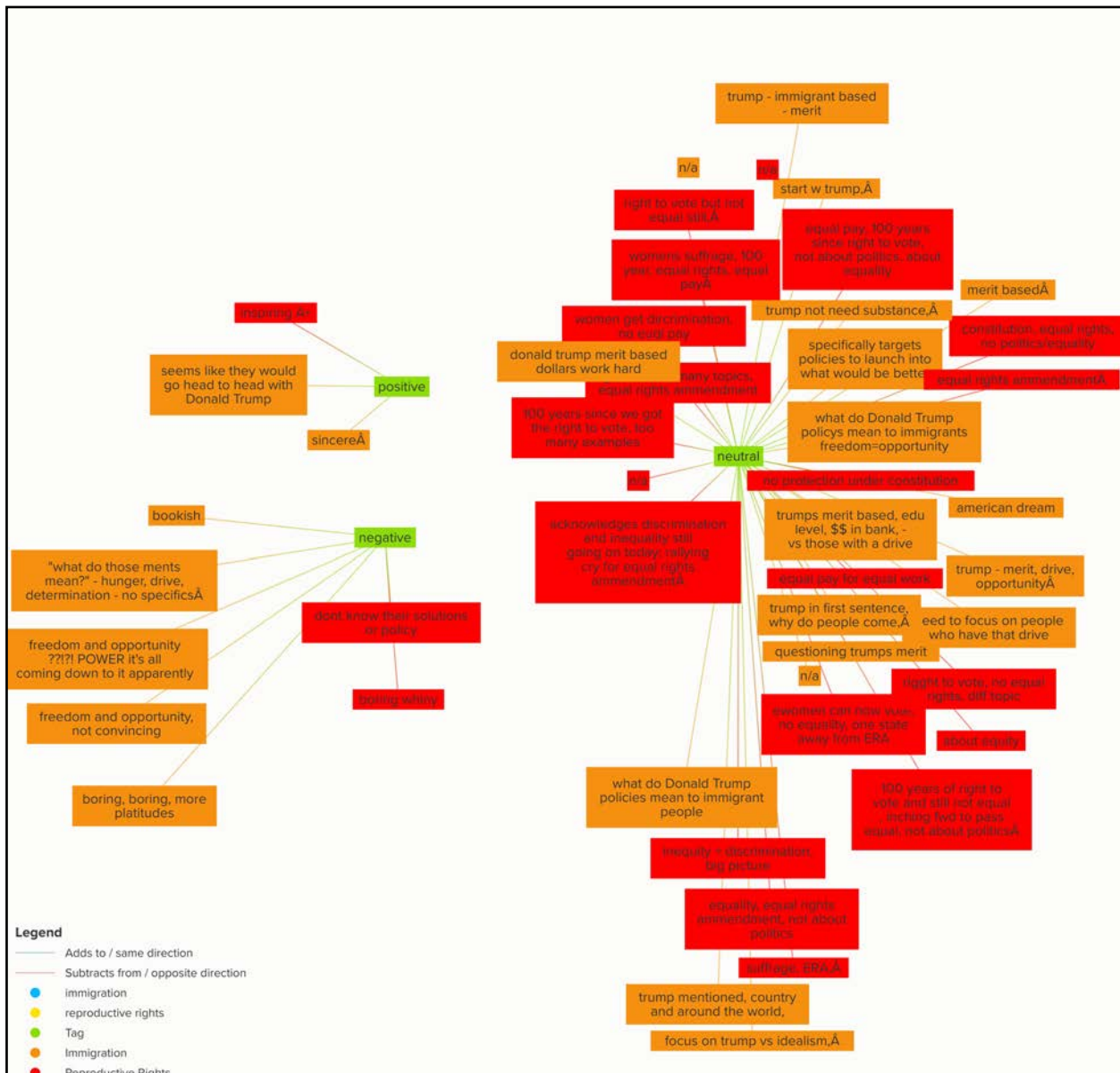

Chart of all Audience Worksheet Comments, connected by Positive/ Negative/ Neutral tag, color coded to Issue

Tulsi Gabbard/ Candidate E

<u>Summary Narrative:</u>
Tulsi Gabbard — a mixed Samoan-American female in her late 30s — received only a single 2nd-choice vote in the beginning, placing her in a tie for eighth place. After being embodied by an African-American male in his 30s, Candidate E moved up to 4th place with 2 votes.

> **Immigration:** When we look at what's important for the American people what they're concerned about right now is what do Donald Trump's policies mean to them. And so when you look at his quote unquote merit-based Uh-immigration rules that he's advocating for. We've gotta ask what do those merits mean it appears that he is talking about only allowing people in this country who have a certain degree who maybe have a certain amount of money in the bank or who uh-maybe coming from countries that maybe they don't necessarily need to leave as opposed to having a-a-a definition of merit that may not meet those material requirements. But really where we're talking about people who have that hunger who have that drive and determination to come to this country work hard for themselves and their families And that deep appreciation of what that freedom and opportunity means that this country represents around the world.

> **Reproductive Rights:** It's been nearly 100 years since women fought for and won the right to vote. Yet we still do not have equal rights and protection under the United States Constitution. There are too many examples in our everyday lives where women still do not get equal pay for equal work and where we still face discrimination simply for being a woman. In 1923 the Equal Rights Amendment was introduced in Congress to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex and was reintroduced every session until it finally passed in 1972. However because of an arbitrary deadline in 1982 by that time only 35 states out of the required 38 had ratified the amendment. In the past two years we've inch forward with successful votes in Nevada and Illinois. And now we're just one state away from finally passing the Equal Rights Amendment. This is not about politics. It's about equality. It's about humanity. It's long overdue that we passed the Equal Rights Amendment and include equality between men and women in the United States Constitution.

<u>Immediate Feedback:</u>
Notes taken during the reading were primarily neutral in tone. Very few positive notes were discovered, and those fairly terse: "sincere," "inspiring." One respondent noted that Candidate E "seems like they would go head to head with Trump," identifying some degree of toughness or courage in the statements.

There were significantly more negative responses, especially on the issue of immigration. Multiple respondents found Candidate E "boring," another added "whiny." Candidate E was also charged with being "bookish" (which we take to be negative, based on context), or alternately to have "no specifics," be "unconvincing," and "not know their solutions or policy."

During the talkback, Candidate E was credited with being the only one that mentioned Trump by name, something the audience seemed to value. Also interestingly, Gabbard/Candidate E seemed to benefit from the sharing of opinions and ideas: after the talkback and the reveal of the candidate's identities, a few members of the audience agreed with the sentiment "this makes me think Tulsi Gabbard is a viable candidate."

Interpretation:
This last statement indicates that coming into the event, Gabbard was not being seriously considered by this audience. Candidate E got a very interesting, conflicting response – scoring largely neutral/ negative but at the same time attracting more support than at the outset. The nature of the very few positive comments may be telling: the audience observed that these were among the few expressions of strength/ firmness made by any of the candidates, and they valued those qualities. A combination of low recognizability along with youthful/femaleness seemed to act as liabilities. Did voicing them an African-American male manage to project the strength in her language and make it heard?
    Additionally, the actor portraying Candidate E mentioned that even within the exercise of voicing her, he was surprised to find that he had a *sense* of her military service – as he had also been in the military, and felt that some markers of that experience had made their way into her statements. There is more to explore in the experience of the actors during embodied/verbatim performance – what aspects of the subject of their embodiment do they come in experiential contact with?
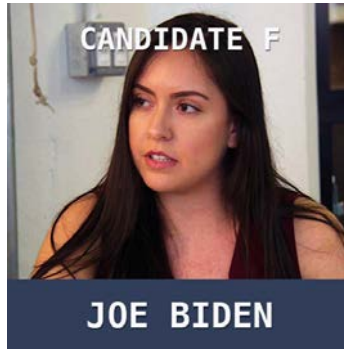
VOTE 1 (Taken on Entry): **2** First Choice, **2** Second Choice (T – 5th place)
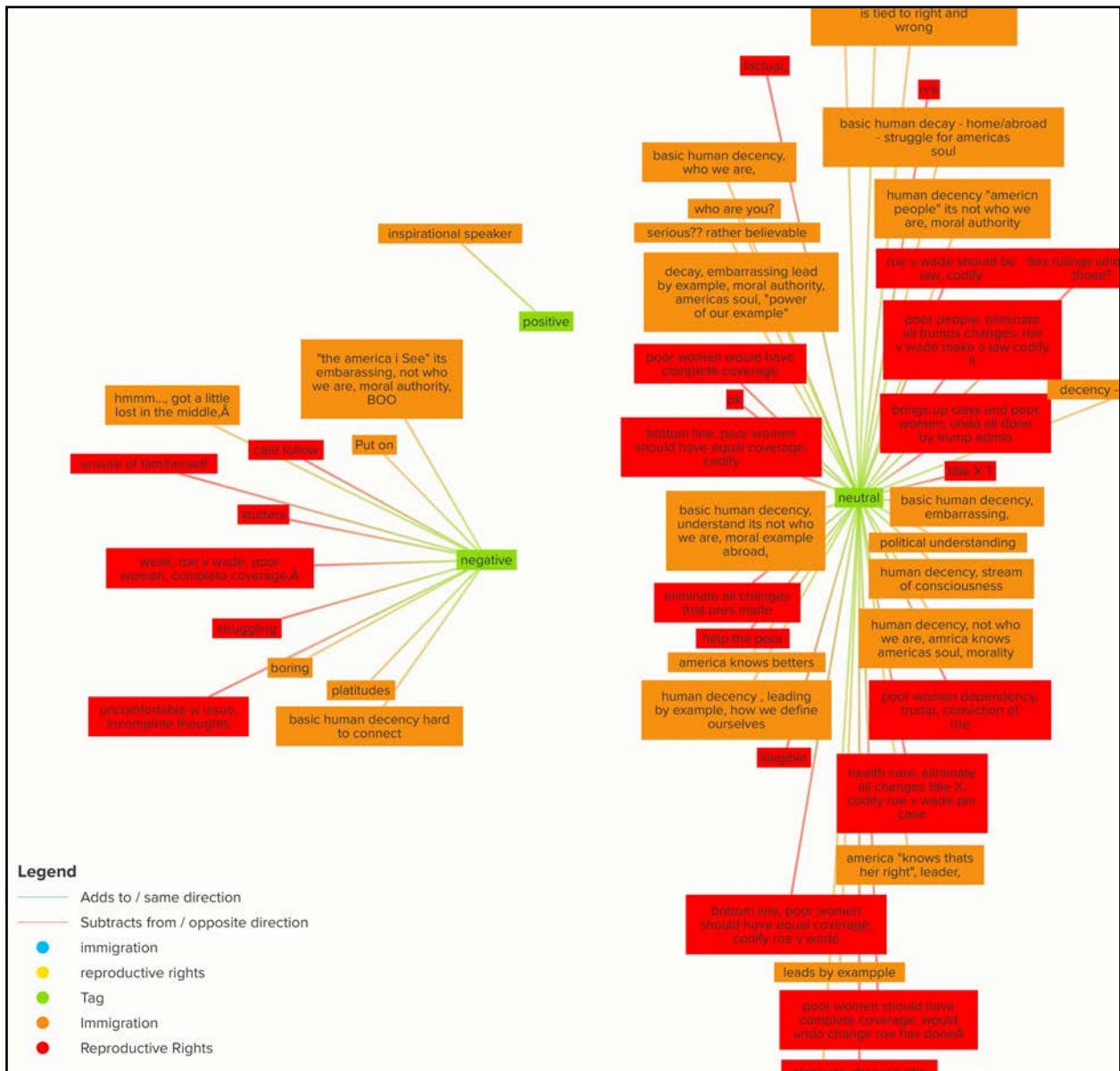
VOTE 2 (Taken after Reading): **1** (T – 5th Place)

Chart of all Audience Worksheet Comments, connected by Positive/ Negative/ Neutral tag, color coded to Issue

Joe Biden/ Candidate F

<u>Summary Narrative:</u>
The highly recognizable, older white male candidate Joe Biden received 2 first choice and 2 second choice votes at the beginning of the event. After the table read, in which he was embodied by a Latinx/ white female in her late 20s, Candidate F received just one vote, landing in a distant 5th place tie.

Immigration: The America I see values basic human decency not snatching children from their parents or turning our back on refugees at our border. America's know that's not right The American people understand pleas because it makes us—it's embarrassing the American people know overwhelmingly that that's not right. That's not who we are. And when America leads by example at home we extend our moral authority to lead abroad. The American people understand that as well. And so that's why there's such it—t—so much upset in America. But this what I call The—the—the struggle for America soul. It goes beyond a single issue It goes to who we are. What we stand for America is led not merely by example of our power but by the power of our example. And the example we're setting. Well I should stop. The America I see doesn't embrace this self-defeating tariffs and trade wars that are underway. America was built on innovation and creativity. We demand to be treated fairly but there's no one in the world anywhere in the world Anywhere in the world that we're afraid to compete with. And even if there's close to a level playing field. Nowhere. It's who we are how we define ourselves.

Reproductive Rights: The bottom line is poor women would have complete coverage. And there's no rationale can be offered that if you're covered by the federal system you cannot then use federal funding to seek uh reproductive healthcare rights. Number two the fact of the matter is that uh I would in fact uh uhm eliminate uh eliminate all the changes that this President made to our attempts to make Title X [read "10"] rational and reasonable. And uh number three uh eh— ih— we— we're— ih—ih— in a situation where I would codify Roe v. Wade as— as— as— as defined by Casey. It should be the law and there's no reason why if the Supreme Court makes a judgment that everybody's worried about with these appeals going to the Supreme Court that it changed I would codify Roe v. Wade and Casey.

<u>Immediate Feedback:</u>
    One respondent noted down that this candidate was an "inspirational speaker." That was the only positive comment to be found — everything else was overwhelmingly negative/ neutral. The negative responses were balanced across both issues, immigration and reproductive rights. On immigration, Candidate F was "boring," used "platitudes," was "hard to connect," and got the audience "lost". On reproductive rights, Candidate F was "weak," "unsure," "uncomfortable," and "struggling." During the talkback, some audience members piled on, calling F's delivery "lofty and vague."

<u>Interpretation:</u>

Biden, a highly recognizable public figure, has been a frontrunner in general polls, and it some of that support carried in to the beginning of the event, even though the audience here was markedly more liberal/ progressive than average (and Biden is publicly seen as a 'centrist').   With his recognizability gone, replaced by youth and femaleness, this candidate's statements did not score well. Even on gender/reproductive rights, this female-embodied candidate was severely unconvincing to the audience.

In the talkback, we also heard a general sentiment that some of the language used by Candidate F on immigration – such as 'it's not who we are,' and basing policy values on the idea of America as moral example to the world – sounded in this context like 'Make America Great Again". In other words, a troubling false premise about American moral superiority, rather than rooting policy in concern for humanity.

The moral examples and attempts at oratory clearly fell flat here. When Biden's age, gender, and status are inverted into some of the most unfavorable categories among the audience (young, female, unrecognizable), these rhetorical efforts are received with high negativity.

CANDIDATE G
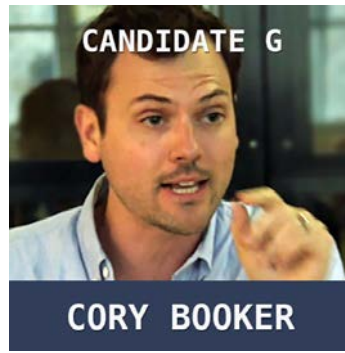
CORY BOOKER

VOTE 1 (Taken on Entry): **1** First Choice, **1** Second Choice (7th place)

VOTE 2 (Taken after Reading): **5** (T – 2nd Place)
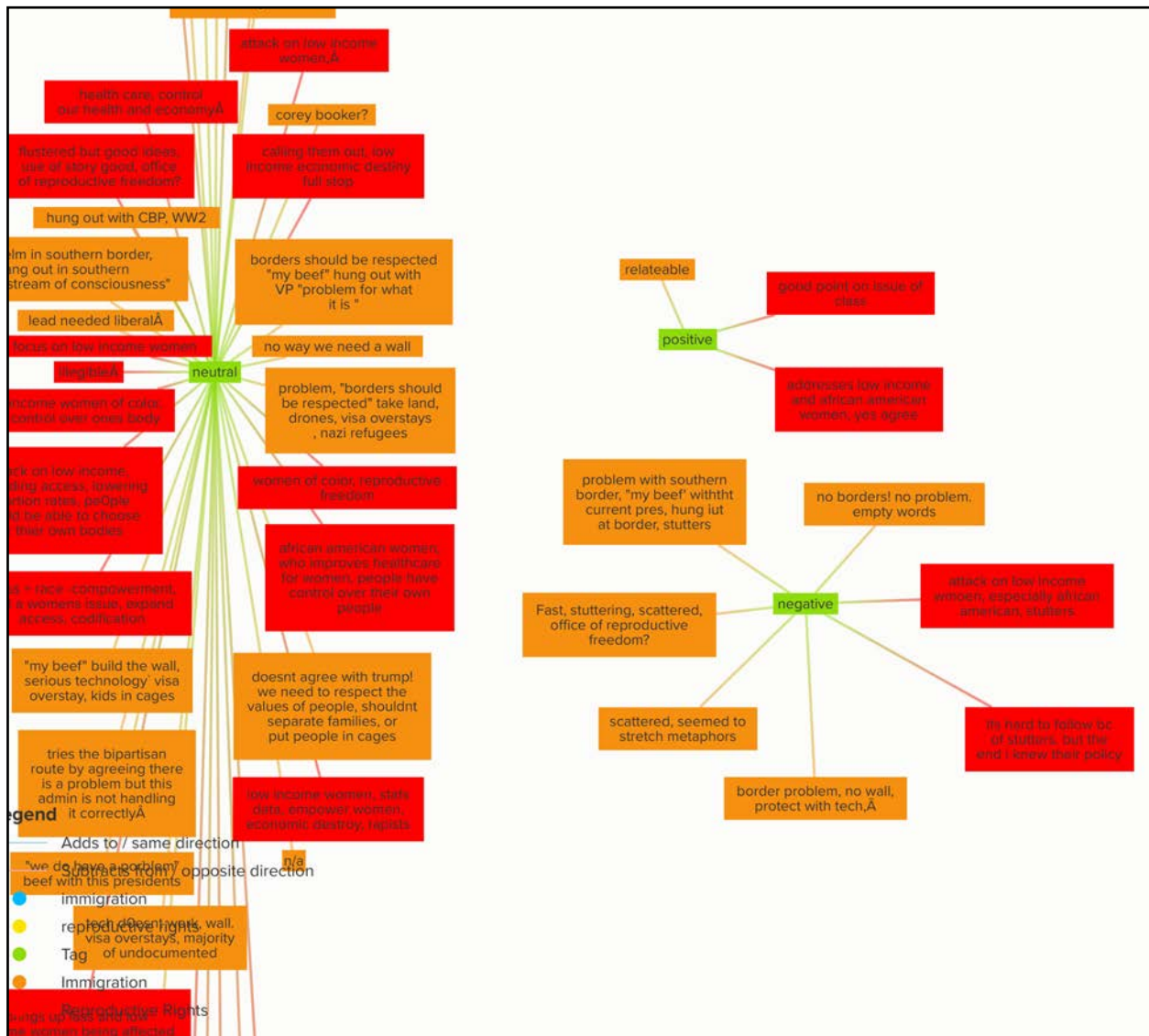

Chart of all Audience Worksheet Comments, connected by Positive/ Negative/ Neutral tag, color coded to Issue

Cory Booker/ Candidate G

Summary Narrative:
Cory Booker, a 50 year old African-American male, received just one vote each for first and second choice, placing him in 7th place out of 10. His policies were voiced by a white male in his mid 30s, and following the table read Candidate G's support rose to 5 votes, second only to the dominant support of frontrunner Candidate D.

Immigration: So we do have a problem at the southern border Democrats should not deny that we don't. W-w-w-we-Nations should have borders borders should be respected. And and and so my beef with this president is that number one his technologies don't work. I-I've gone down to the border. I've hung out with CBP uh-uh-and other border patrol folks. And they're like-there's no way we need a b-wall coast to coast. In fact talk about government taking things from you even to build that wall. We'd have to take land for many landowners now that don't want to give up acres of their land for a wall. We have a time now where you could use sensors and technologies and drones and do a lot more to protect the border which is what we should do. I also want to correct people on this mistake that often people make is most of the undocumented immigration in our country is from visa over stays. For people that come through airports and they find some reason to come here on a tourist visa and then just stay. And so we have to talk about the problem for what it is not let people demonize that and then do the things that protect our country but never ever violate the values the human dignity of another person separating families. I've never-I haven't met an American yet that's in favor of separating families and throwing kids in cages So putting resources and making sure if you come to this country like a boat during World War Two that came here from Eastern Europe seeking security from the Nazis. This is a dark chapter. We turn that ship around and those people died in the Holocaust. It was moments like that that made us say as a country, "We're not going to just turn people away anymore."

Reproductive Rights: these bills are first and foremost an attack on low-income women which are disproportionately African American. Because if you're a woman of of- a privilege you can find other ways to get access to health care which is a- abortion is healthcare. And- and so this is almost to be counterproductive The- the states that have had the biggest drops in abortions and unwanted pregnancies are not the states that are attacking women and trying to take away their rights. They're actually CSI Colorado that lowered their abortion rate like 40% by focusing on low income women and expanding their access to contraceptive care. You- you empower women not only will you get if you're a person that i-is morally against the idea of an abortion you- you actually-by leaning into women and empowering them. Not only will you get what you want in terms of lowering those abortions but women have better control of their economic destiny better control of their health and well-being better control over making decisions over their body. People should be able to control their own bodies period full stop. and f- fellows we can't just sit back and say this is a woman's issue it is not it is- it is a wor- an issue of people it is issue if- if human beings and we were just talking about mass inca- and being able ta- k- that fundamental liberty of having control over your body. There was a teenager that- that that testified in Alabama who had been raped by a family member.

And they— they have now basically said that the doctor who would perform the abortion is going to have more criminal liability the rapist themselves that is insane. And— and so as presidential— as president I'm going to expand access to Planned Parenthood. Uh— I'm going to codify Roe v Wade leg— legislative you but I'm going to create an Office of Reproductive Freedom in the White House. So we can address not only having women have access Ta— to contraceptive care health care but actually start to deal with these issues of "Hey I love children." But we have still— we lead the industrial world in stillbirths and inf— low birth weight babies and infant mortality. And mmm— maternal mortality we need to have an office that's coordinating women's access to reproductive care.

Immediate Feedback:

    Audience notes on Candidate G were largely neutral, and secondarily negative. On immigration in particular, audience members made negative notes highlighting problems with the cadence of speech ("stutters") and a sense of being 'scattered' in his ideas. One note called his policy 'empty words.' While there were fewer negative responses to the Candidate's positions on gender/reproductive rights, the nature of those responses was the same: primarily about delivery ('hard to follow'), stuttering, cadence. Only three notes reflected positive reactions to this candidate, in this case one called him 'relatable' and the other two were substantive: he made a 'good point' and the audience member said 'yes I agree.'
    During the discussion, audience members also raised feelings of 'conflict' around Candidate G — saying they felt he was in a 'pissing contest' with Trump, and being disconcerted by the emphasis on technology when discussing immigration.

Interpretation:

Considering the written and verbal feedback, Candidate G's strength in the vote is surprising. He received very little audience favor for his delivery, and not much evidence for support of his substance. Still, he received the second-highest number of votes. To what extent is this candidate benefiting from his whiteness, maleness, or youth? How much is Cory Booker's recognition factor, or his blackness/ maleness (or even his age?) a liability for him in attracting support? Is there evidence in the very small sample of positive notes for why this upsurge in support — is being 'relatable' really that valuable? And what exactly do we mean by it?

VOTE 1 (Taken on Entry): **8** First Choice, **8** Second Choice (<u>1st</u> place)

VOTE 2 (Taken after Reading): **5** (T – <u>2nd</u> Place)

Legend

- — Adds to / same direction
- — Subtracts from / opposite direction
- ● immigration
- ● reproductive rights
- ● Tag
- ● Immigration
- ● Reproductive Rights
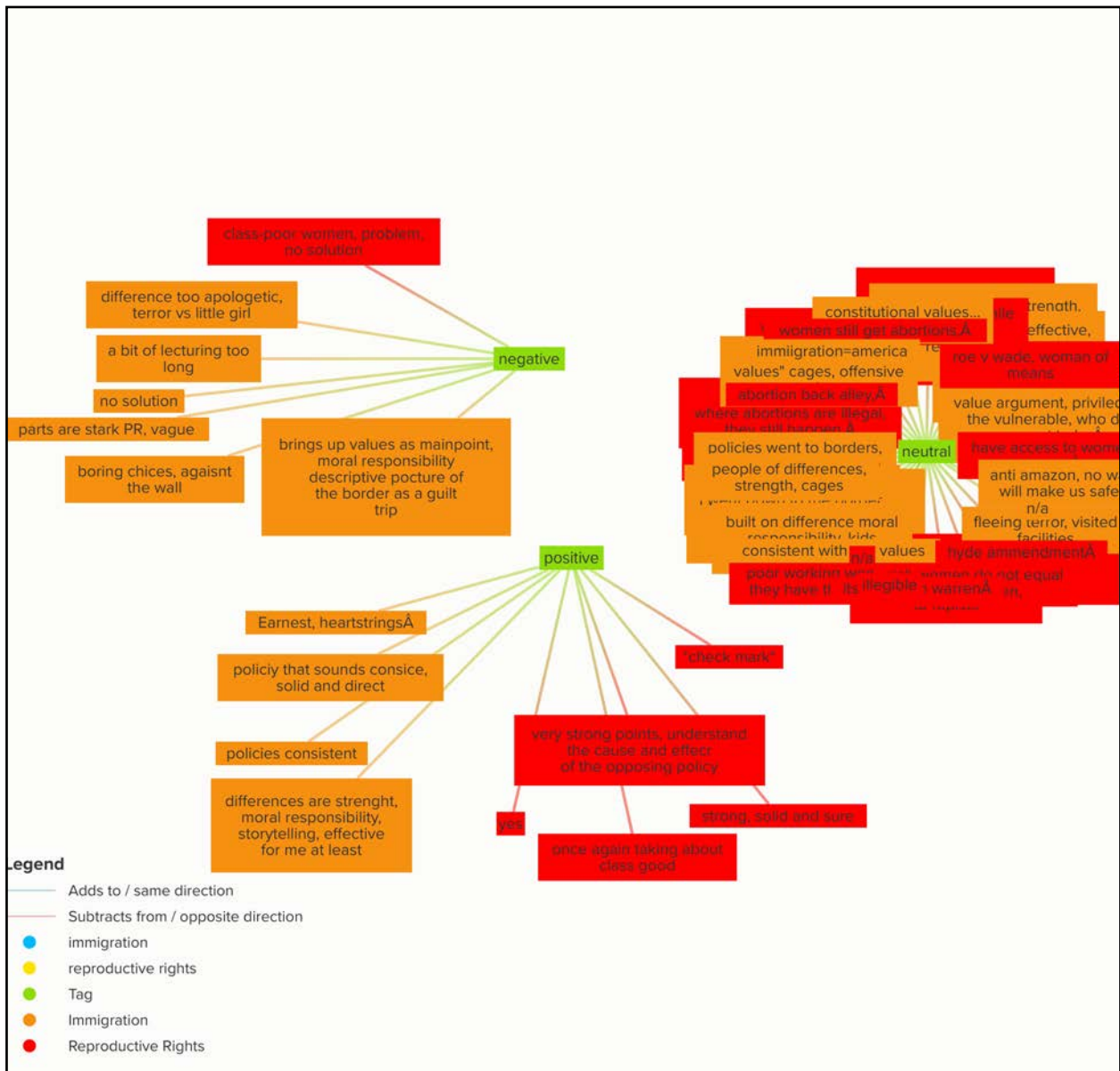
Chart of all Audience Worksheet Comments, connected by Positive/ Negative/ Neutral tag, color coded to Issue

Elizabeth Warren/ Candidate H

<u>Summary Narrative:</u>
Elizabeth Warren, a 70 year old white female, was the top choice among the audience coming in to the event, collecting 16 total votes, including 8 first-choice votes, tied with Bernie Sanders. After being voiced and embodied by a 35 year old white/latinx female, Candidate H lost a small number of votes, landing in a tie for 2nd place alongside Candidate G (Cory Booker).

Immigration: So let me just start where I think of our whole immigration policy and that is we need to have policies on immigration that are consistent with our values. We are a country that is built on our differences. That is our strength not our weakness. And when people come to the United States because they are fleeing terror in Central America they fear for their lives then we have a moral responsibility to listen and to be there. You know if I can just take a minute to say on this one I went down to the border last year when the word first began to come out about children taken away from their mothers and I I just want you all to envision this. Think of a big ol' Amazon warehouse only dirty and smelled bad. And when I walked in on my left were cages maybe 10 feet wide 40 feet deep a toilet back in the corner one after another after another crammed full of men. On the right one after another after another crammed full of women. And then you walk into the main area and there were cages about the size of this central area here with nothing but little girls in it. And over there nothing but little boys. That's not who we are. That is not the country we want to be. And an immigration system that is administered so that it is not able to tell the difference between a criminal, a terrorist, and a 12 year old little girl is an immigration system that not only is not keeping us safer, it does not reflect our values. I will not support the building of a wall that does not make us safer. Uh the a– administration itself uh people within it have already said this is not about security this is not how we're going to make ourselves safer. The kind of wall that is proposed now is a monument to hate and division. We are a better country than that.

Reproductive Rights: Here's how I look at this. I'm– I've lived in an America where abortions were illegal, and understand this: women still got abortions. Now some got lucky on what happened and some got really unlucky on what happened. But the bottom line is they were there. And under the Hyde Amendment, under every one of these efforts to try to chip away or to push back or to get rid of Roe versus Wade, understand this: women of means will still have access to abortions. Who won't will be poor women, will be working women, will be women who can't afford to take off three days from work, will be very young women, will be women who've been raped, will be women who have been molested by someone in their own family. We do not pass laws that take away that freedom from the women who are most vulnerable.

<u>Immediate Feedback:</u>
Candidate H garnered audience notes that reflected a lot of position-staking; there were relatively fewer neutral notes compared to ones that were either overtly positive or negative.

In this position-staking, the audience was also very evenly divided between negative and positive responses.

On immigration especially, the audience responses were split with strong opinions: the statement was both "too apologetic," "lecturing and long," and also seen as "earnest," "concise, solid, and direct." There was "no solution" offered in this "boring" policy that uses a "guilt trip" to make its point, while for others the "storytelling is effective" and "policies consistent."

On gender/reproductive rights, this candidate clearly won more positive support, with only a single negative note taken ("no solution"), and several that emphasized how "strong, solid, and sure" the statement was, receiving in some cases single word ("yes") or illustrative affirmation, like a solid check mark indicating, perhaps, the selection of this candidate for a vote, or approval.

In the discussion afterward Candidate H was praised for being "most consistent" and for being one of the "strongest storytellers."

Interpretation:

After the candidate's identities were revealed, a couple of audience members noted how their positive response to H's storytelling had made them believe that H (and D, ultimately) must have been "minority candidates" — with whom they associated storytelling and the compelling use of narrative.

Overall, Candidate H lost support relative to Candidate D (the actor for whom most strongly resembled the real Elizabeth Warren) even though H's statements had strong positive scores. Is this simply because D was so overwhelmingly favored in this case? Or is there something about H that also actively shed support? A number of Warren supporters coming in must have been able to detect her here; but an even larger number of them could not see through the younger female identity, and actually conflated Warren with O'Rourke.
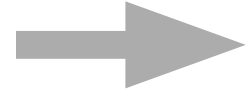
VOTE 1 (Taken on Entry): **0** First Choice, **0** Second Choice (9th/ last place)

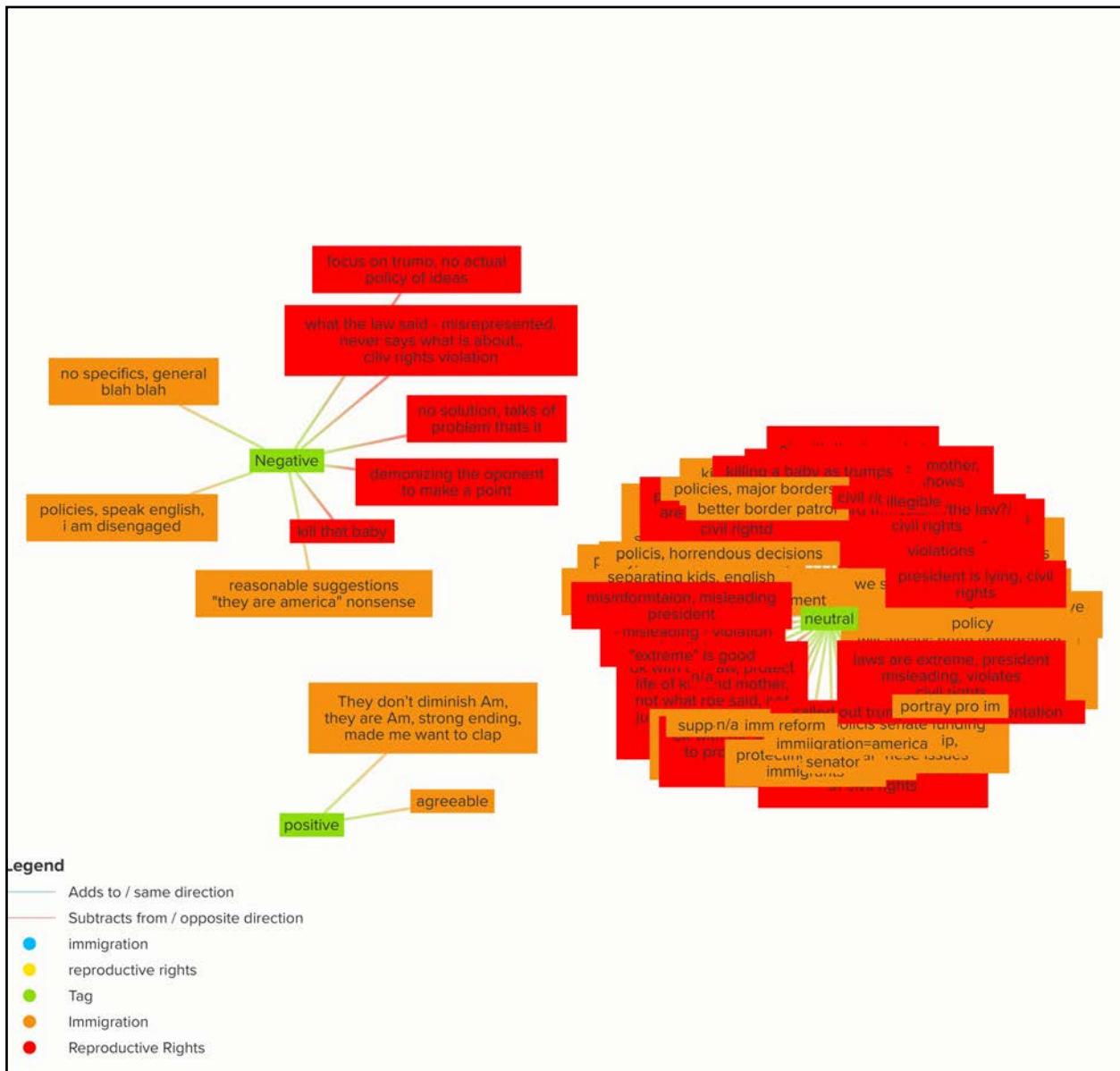VOTE 2 (Taken after Reading): **0** (T – 5th/last Place)

Chart of all Audience Worksheet Comments, connected by Positive/ Negative/ Neutral tag, color coded to Issue

Amy Klobuchar/ Candidate I

Summary Narrative:
Amy Klobuchar, among this audience, had no votes for either 1st or 2nd choice. Voicing/embodiment by a white male did not alter that level of support, and Candidate I received no votes and was tied at the bottom of the list.

Immigration: I think what has to change are the policies and the people that are making these policies are making horrendous decisions like separating kids from their parents we are always gonna need immigration enforcement um I think we know that uh we that is we are a major country with major borders so to me the issue is what are those policies and please let's get comprehensive immigration reform something I have strongly supported for years we passed a bill out of the senate that not only involved order at the border and fffunding for that it also involved a path to citizenship for people who obey the law for people who learn to speak English uh for people who are part of this country uh for decades and that's what I think we need which of course includes the Dreamers includes people uh who have been here legally that is what we need to do and I um am just appalled by this administration has been talking about immigrants they don't diminish America they are America.

Reproductive Rights: I'm okay with the law and what the law says is that in that third trimester uh it is allowed to protect the health and the life of the mother but that's not what the President said the President mislead the American public what he said at a rally was basically a doctor would be holding a baby and kill and kill that baby that's illegal under the law that is already a crime I think to protect the life and the health of the mother that is exactly what the Supreme Court ruling says and I am okay with that but I just think it's really important for your viewers to know because there's so much misinformation out there that what these laws do is extreme there are a number of Republicans who have said they are opposed to them they are extreme then you have the President misleading the public and telling them that this is about basically killing a baby after a baby is born that is not what this is about that is a crime so I think what people have to understand here is that we are at a point where a number it is not just Alabama this has happened in Ohio this has happened in Missouri uh this happened in Georgia there's a law that's being passed in Michigan that the Democratic governor is going to veto this is happening across the country and people need to know what's really going on here this is a violation of civil rights.

Immediate Feedback:
Responses on the notesheets were mostly neutral or negative. On immigration, Candidate I managed two positive notes against 3 negative ones, including "made me want to clap," a very strong supportive statement. On the negative side, however, responses included a mocking "blah blah blah," "I am disengaged," and "nonsense" – also pretty forceful.

On gender/reproductive rights the feedback was solely negative, the audience disliking the candidate's focus on problems not solutions, and the "demonizing of the opposition."

During the live conversation, however, there was more position-staking, with one audience member singling Candidate I out for a "very strong" immigration position. It's worth noting again that the notesheets are only a reference for people's responses, not a clear record of them. Used as a neutral notetaking space, not every preferential reaction will be registered here. A few moments later in the same live conversation, another audience member singled out Candidate I as a model of politicians "not saying anything."

Interpretation:
We saw no change tracked in the audience's preference for Candidate I/ Amy Klobuchar. It's interesting to note that so many negative references were raised in people taking notes on this candidate's gender/reproductive rights position – did the maleness of the actor make this clearer for listeners, with no presumed benefit of the doubt for a female candidate? It would be an interesting problem to see if *any* identity characteristics could make these statements attract more support.
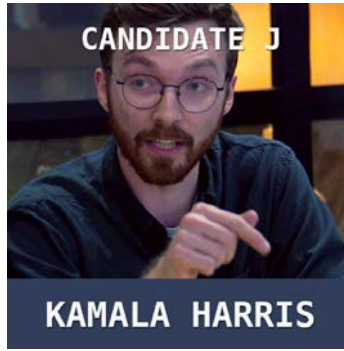
VOTE 1 (Taken on Entry): **3** First Choice, **3** Second Choice 4th place)

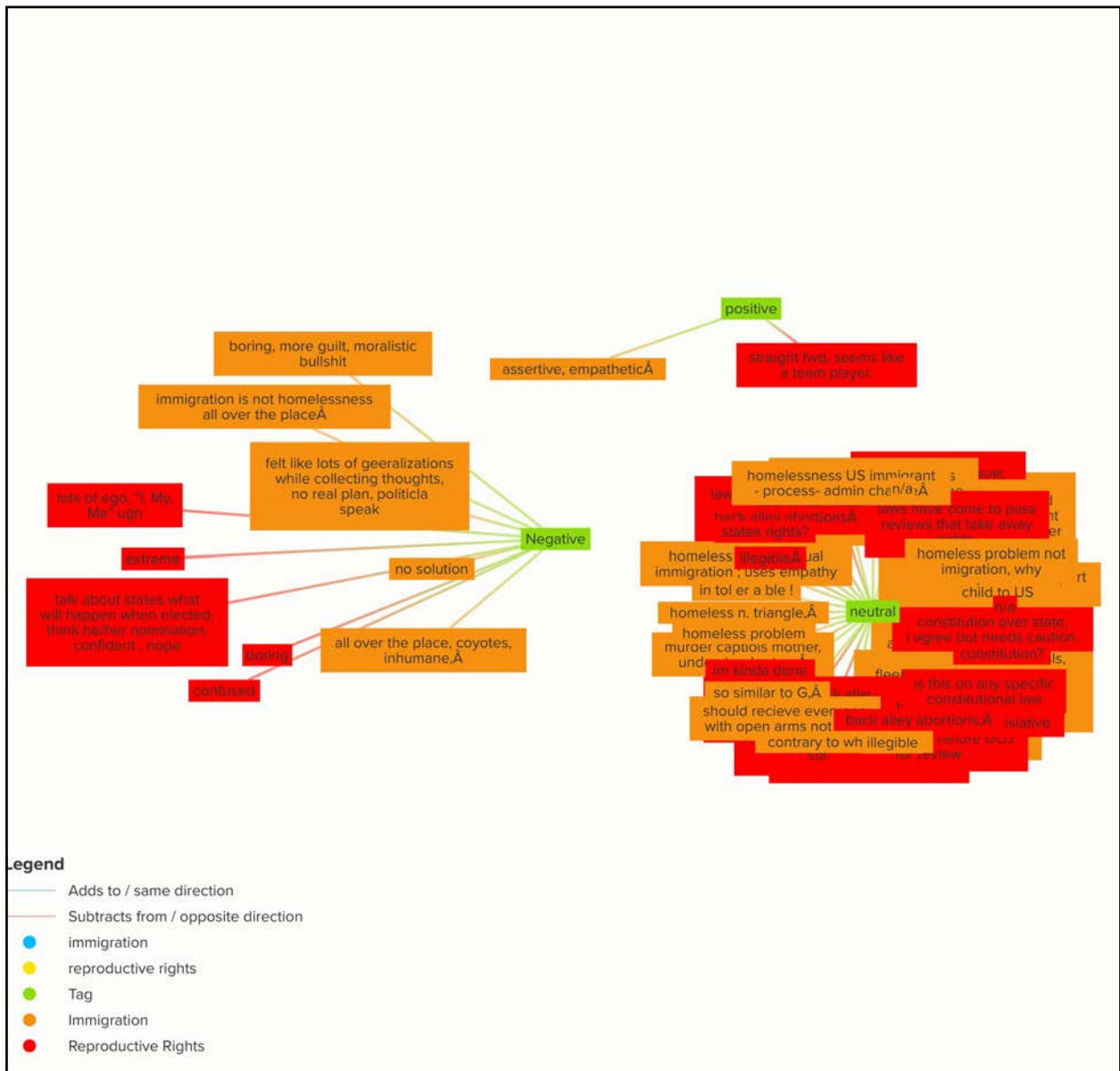VOTE 2 (Taken after Reading): **0** (T – 5th/last Place)

Chart of all Audience Worksheet Comments, connected by Positive/ Negative/ Neutral tag, color coded to Issue

Kamala Harris/ Candidate J

Summary Narrative:
At the beginning of the event, Harris collected three 1st choice and three 2nd choice votes, placing her fourth in the field, just behind Yang and ahead of Biden. After being voiced by a white male in his late 20s, Candidate J lost all previous support and gathered no votes.

Immigration: We can't have comprehensive immigration reform that works unless it addresses the status for those eleven some million undocumented immigrants. So what we need to do is make sure there's a pathway to citizenship for them too uh uh things that's that's incredibly frustrating about this to me is that there's actually broadly an American consensus on what we're supposed to do about this. You know leadership is supposed to be about taking issues that are very divisive and somehow finding a way to unify Americans around that. Th-that's how a good president uh earns her or his paycheck. But right now we have an issue where there's actually a pretty broad consensus and has been used to divide us. It's it's actually remarkable feat of whatever the opposite of leadership is a pathway to citizenship for uh undocumented people in this country. A level of protection for Dreamers a set of reforms to clear up the bureaucracy and the backlogs in the lawful immigration system which is how my father as an immigrant came to this country and became a US citizen and reasonable measures on border security. We know what to do. It's just that we don't have the leadership in Washington to do to do it and I'm afraid one of the reasons is we've got a White House that has actually computed that it is better off politically if this problem goes unsolved so that Americans can cu-continue to be divided around it for short-term political gain and that has got to end with the new president.

Reproductive Rights: Are we gonna go back to the days of back alley abortions women died before we had Roe v. Wade in place and so I'm gonna tell you on this issue I'm kinda done because here's how I feel about it guys. Lemme tell you cause here's the thing there are states that keep passing these laws and so and when elected I'm gonna put in place and require that states that have a history of passing legislation that is designed to to prevent or or limit a woman's access to reproductive health care that those laws have to come before my Department of Justice for a review and approval and until we determine that they are constitutional they will not take effect.

Immediate Feedback:
Audience notes taken during the event, if they weren't neutral, included primarily negative language and responses, evenly split between the two issues, reproductive rights and immigration. Only one set of notes for Candidate J was positive, pointing out that they were "assertive and empathetic" on immigration and a "straightforward" "team player" on gender/reproductive rights. Otherwise members found J both "all over the place" and "boring," and "moralistic" and "extreme" with too much "ego."
    Responses to Candidate J were of great interest in the discussion following the reading as well – because those who had supported Harris

were surprised to have lost track of her, and to even have had negative responses to Candidate J. "Something I find compelling about Harris is her confidence. But in this context, coming from a white man, it sounded condescending." "I was turned off by the words, but they're the words of a woman of color being read by a white man." "My first two choices were Beto and Harris, and then I picked out Beto but I put down that I hated Harris — the confidence, not even confidence but arrogance, it just turned me off so much, she just dismissed so much."

Interpretation:
Harris/Candidate J's loss of support is of interest because it seems associated in some respect with the dramatic swapping of identity in this case. But the change is also an outlier compared to the others, because it is the only instance in which embodiment by a white man cost a candidate support. It is consistent, however, in another regard, in that the white man is also younger, and throughout this exercise youth has been punished. What role does age play in our perception of the mix of gender, race, and identity?
     What are the implications for this audience that a woman of color is appreciated for being aggressive and confident but the same words from a white male are deemed arrogant and egotistical?

THE DEMOCRATIC FIELD

EDITION 01
JUNE 2019

SUMMARY REPORT

<u>CONCLUSIONS AND OUTCOMES</u>

TDF 01 is a first experiment in developing a model of 'civic intervention' that allows performing artists to leverage their *ways of knowing* to clarify public perceptions about the roots of their political preferences. We hope to learn more about the factors affecting audience perception, as well as ways to present those factors back to the audience in a critical reflection that can contribute to their sense of agency within the political process.

The event was full of moments of revelation as expressed by the audience, and stimulated intense discourse about politics and perception. Overall, the audience was *surprised* at the efficacy of the event, and enthusiastic at how it might affect their experience of the 'real' debates, as well as possible variations of The Democratic Field in form and context that might also interrogate other aspects of our biases, perception, and preferences.

—
A week following the event, we circulated a followup survey to attendees to ask about their experience of the real Democratic debate in light of having attended TDF 01. We also asked a few followup questions about TDF 01 itself.

As was evident in the polling before and after the table-read, more than two-thirds of the audience ended up selecting an anonymized candidate who was someone *other* than either of the candidates they had listed a preference for at the beginning.

Count of When the event began, you voted in a straw poll for your preferred 2 candidates. After the reading, when you voted for an anonymized candidate, did it end up being for either of your 2 earlier choices?

Yes - I voted for the policies o...
30.0%

No - the candidate I voted for...
70.0%
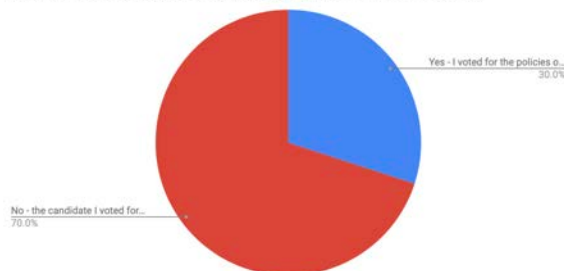
This is indicative of attendees having low recognition for their preferred candidate based on the content of their policies alone. Persona plays a significant role.

Survey Question: **"How did the shuffling of bodies and policies affect the way you paid attention to the reading?"**

"I am not sure how much it changed my thinking. I was listening for the person I supported in #1 (Warren) during the event, so I thought I picked her. To my surprise who I thought was Warren was Beto. I learned more about Beto and liked him. On the other hand, I am really against another white male as president. As a woman, I am not saying any woman will do, however, if a woman is as qualified, I will vote for her. I am so upset about the misogyny in this country."

"I focused almost entirely on how the statements were read rather than what was being said. Tone of voice, pauses, body language, verbal stumbles, etc."

"I was more in tune with what I was hearing; that is, I really paid attention (listened) to truly understand what each candidate stood for in the issues, what they were planning (solution)."

"It made me pay attention to the words so much more "

"I paid very close attention to the words people were saying and became aware of my tendency to make character judgments about candidates (since I couldn't do so in this setting)."

"Added a layer of questions that made it more difficult to concentrate."

"I paid much more attention to why I might be interpreting content of the talk/statements the way I did. Was it actors' delivery? Appearance? order? etc."

"Was more objective — one listened more closely with the intent of determining who the original speaker was"

—

During the talkback following the table-read, we sought general reflections on the attendees' experience of the project. Some of these thoughts were captured in the video documentation.

"There was a shift in how we all felt from the beginning of this to the end. it's an exercise, and people need to be put through this exercise. it's amazing."

"The United States is leading the world in voting on appearances; we tend to not listen"

"I can't remember anything anyone said, but I can pick out who I want to get a beer with"

"I am a journalist, and I cover politics. I expected to know who was who. I got them all wrong."

In the followup survey, we asked to expand on these reflections in hindsight. **"What are your general reflections or reactions to the event now that a few days have passed?"**

"I was surprised by people's excitement of politics in a positive way. Also, I found the candidates answers to be very similar. No one offered any new revelation to issues."

"I think that the embodied people and the voices on the stage are still full of signals and indicators that trigger implicit biases. But, I think if I were not a researcher myself, I'd think less about that. That said, I thought it was valuable and I enjoyed it and it made me think."

"This event equipped me with a new perspective on observing my own reactions to political speeches and candidates."

"I feel it makes for a more objective assessment of the candidates."

"I think this is something that should be done on a larger (national) scale, but involve both political parties at the same table. Would be interesting to see if Republicans would vote Republican, and Dems vote Dems!"

"Implicit biases to people's appearances and voices will never go away. However, switching things up does get you to pay attention better which is all we can hope for right? I am curious about how the quotes were chosen for each candidate, as the biases of the person selecting quotes will have a lot of influence."

"I very much enjoyed the event and thought it was very helpful in pushing me to be more reflective about how I interpret political statements."

"I thought it was really interesting how different audience members interpreted their own interpretations, and why. For example, I was surprised that people seemed to feel that having the actors made them focus *more* on the content of the statements rather than than see them *differently*"

These effects, we reminded the audience, might also carry over into their experience of viewing the real debates the evenings following the event. In the followup survey we asked about this. **Did you end up watching any of the real Democratic debates? Do you think the Democratic Field affected the way you watched them? How so?**

"Yes and yes. I was very aware of how much I looked at people rather than listened to them. Aesthetics played a much bigger role in how I heard them and what I heard."

"Yes, I watched the second one. I listened closer, but honestly, it was a shit show—a lot of yelling. I did listen to some of the candidates whose quotes I did not find compelling during your event. For instance, I did not like Harris' comments in your event but in the second debate I thought she made some remarks that resonated with me."

"It made me pay attention to each persons words and be more conscious of when my reactions to people's body language were becoming too prominent."

"I did watch the debates and after watching the Democratic Field I became more aware of gender in relation to policies."

"Definitely effected the way I listened to the debate – paid attention to how they constructed their position."

The attendees were not the only ones experiencing new learning during the event – the performers themselves had not known which candidate they were inhabiting, and even in the process they were often surprised to discover things about the candidates and their own perceptions. This kind of artistic recognition is extremely important in this work, especially as we consider the possibility that training performers for these kinds of events could be a big component of how we expand the project. The idea that the performing artist gains a unique form of intimate expertise about certain aspects of the candidate is a key tenet of acquisition of 'artists' literacy' in forms of knowledge not achievable through other means of research.

Performer's reflections:

> *""While briefly prepping for the night's events, it was exciting to read the speeches of the different candidates and experience their patterns/ passion. While the evening helped many of us consider candidates' policies separate from their personas, reading the different speeches also helped me experience their passion (or lack there of...) and invited me to have some empathy for them. It was also freeing (and annoying in some ways) to read a man's pitch on reproductive health – as a woman, I would never speak about the topic the same way Andrew Yang did."*

> *"One of my favorite Verbatim (Performance Lab) things we've ever done! Remarkably valuable exercise."*

> *"I thought I was reading Kamala Harris. I felt both of my statements were very scripted and polished compared to others. Beto used very very few filler words that tend to send a message of unsureness or lack of credibility. Also, I think my age and gender played a role in the final result. I believe I was the oldest actor. The participant who wanted me to be Elizabeth Warren really only had one body that was close to fitting that description, mine."*

> *"I am always interested in participating in these experiments as an actor. Beyond what the audience described, which I won't repeat in detail here, I am surprised by how much personality and image plays a role. All of us (as actors) were trying (as candidates) to convey our messaging to an audience, connect with them intellectually, emotionally, rationally, etc. And so much of how that landed on them was based on who WE were as actors (or people...really). How trustworthy we come across, how genuine we seemed. Try as we might, it is impossible to separate policy or platform from personality or persona. I felt connected to my mystery candidate and found that I took any feedback (positive or critical) to heart.*

> *I also found that the talkback reinforced the universal mantra 'that you can't please everyone', yet that is something that most candidates try to do. Some 'voters' wanted an emotional connection, to know that we could sympathize with average Americans. Some wanted more direct details on policy and concrete plans. I found myself internally defending my mystery candidate, thinking ""you all want different things! Make up your minds!!"" Love it!"*

"The evening made me listen in a different way to the debates and look at a few candidates in a new light than I would have had we not done the exercise. I truthfully might have skipped the whole thing if not for the event, but am very glad I did watch and listen. For example, I was taken by Gabbard's statements in the anonymized version and knew little to nothing about her prior to that. I would not have looked up her website or paid her much mind at the first round debates if not for this exercise. I also thought it was interesting that, even veiled in anonymization (and through an older white female) I was still turned off by what by turned out to be Beto's words. I was surprised, and reaffirmed, in my feelings about him as a presidential nominee."

CONCLUSION

The entire event turns out to represent a single 'data point' in terms of the preference—change tracked for each candidate, measured against the audience's stated preferences at the outset. Multiple Democratic Field events are needed to see trends in preferences against different aspects of a candidate's identity (age, race, gender) and substance (policy positions, language use).

What is clear is that participation in the event generates measurable degrees of critical recognition in all the participants, and that this experience tracks beyond the event itself, and into the attendees' broader civic engagement.

The vote counting and preference measuring are one category of data that can be tracked across multiple prospective events. The qualitative materials drawn out of the attendee worksheets and the recorded audience talkback are a second, rich category of information that we can learn a great deal about American voting populations from — and in a way unique from conventional surveying and polling, one which invites far more critical reflection.

<u>REPORT</u>

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Raw Survey Data
<u>https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1W1J3oyd33CW7j_arrox78s–MDi3IqjksRHegBTbOaTU/edit?usp=sharing</u>

Video
<u>https://www.facebook.com/artistsliteracies/videos/2422779621136310/</u>