A photograph of a weathered stone wall. On the left, there is a red heart and a black silhouette of a girl in a dress reaching up. In the center, there is a large, dark, irregularly shaped box containing the title. Below it is another similar box containing the subtitle. On the right, there is a smaller box containing the author's name and date. The wall has some faint graffiti, including the words "THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE".

Natasha Jaczek, PhD Candidate
University of Ottawa
June 18, 2025

LESSONS IN LEGAL CONSCIOUSNESS:

The Effect of Public Legal Education on Young People

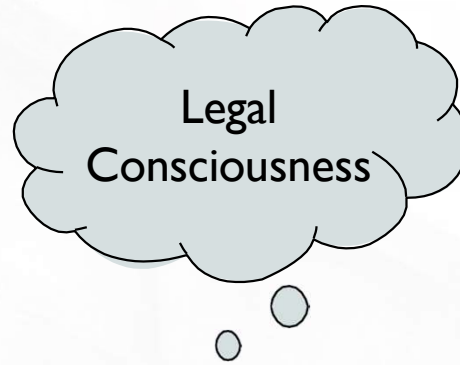
The background is a photograph of a weathered, grey concrete wall. It is covered in various graffiti tags and paint splatters in yellow, blue, and red. A red heart-shaped sticker is affixed to the wall on the left side. The overall scene is somewhat gritty and urban.

THOUGHT EXPERIMENT...

Imagine you are a 17-year-old high school student working part-time at a local coffee shop. You've been working there for a few months, and your manager consistently gives you the worst shifts and piles on extra tasks. You think it might be because of your [insert ground of discrimination]. When you bring it up, your manager says you're "just being sensitive." You're unsure whether your feelings are valid or if you have any legal rights as a young worker.



1. **Do you know your legal rights in this situation?**
2. **Would you know where to get legal information?**
3. **Do you feel confident you could get a fair result?**

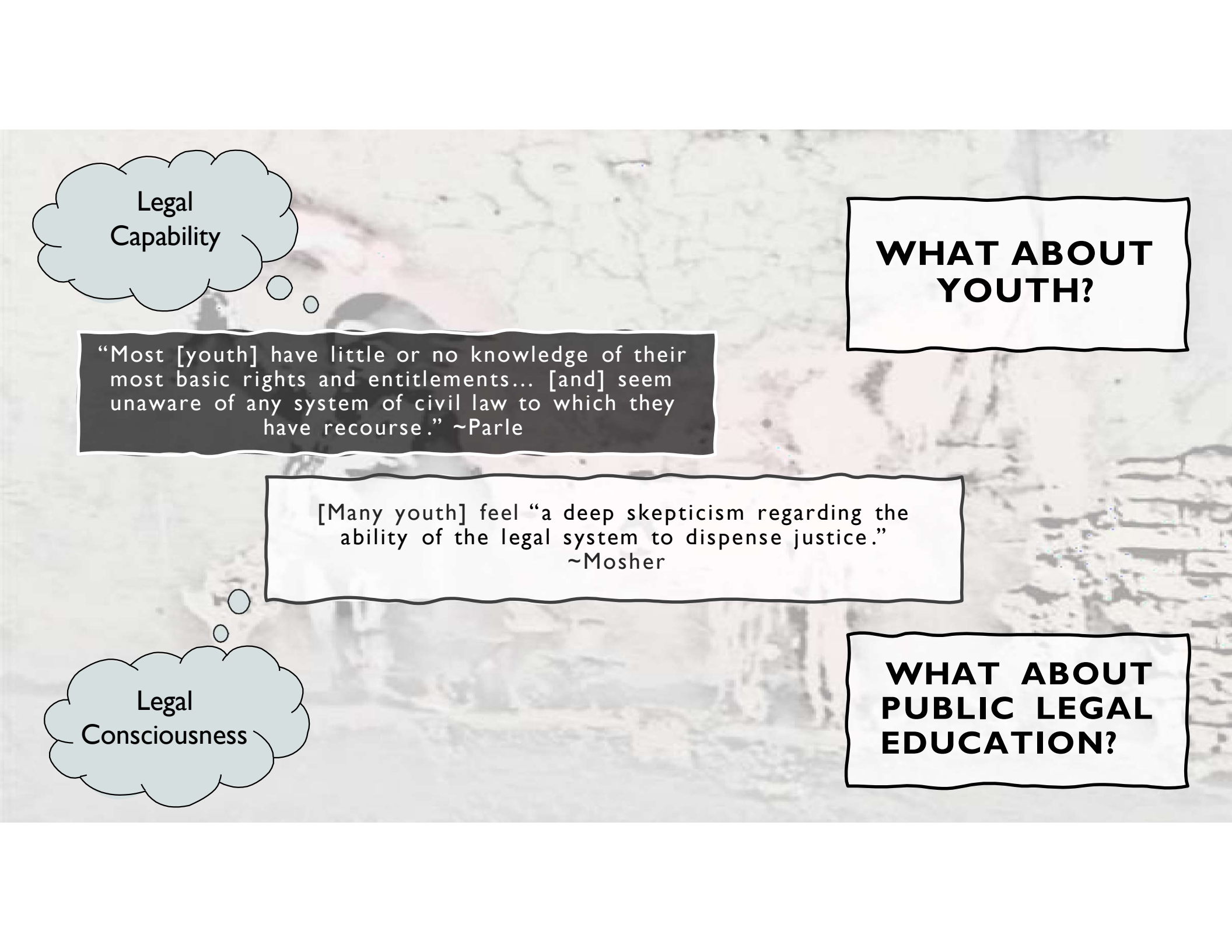


1. **Do you think the legal system has a role?**
2. **Do you trust that the law is there to help you?**
3. **Would you rather just not engage the law?**



SELF-ASSESSMENT

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?



Legal
Capability

**WHAT ABOUT
YOUTH?**

“Most [youth] have little or no knowledge of their most basic rights and entitlements... [and] seem unaware of any system of civil law to which they have recourse.” ~Parle

[Many youth] feel “a deep skepticism regarding the ability of the legal system to dispense justice.”
~Mosher

Legal
Consciousness

**WHAT ABOUT
PUBLIC LEGAL
EDUCATION?**

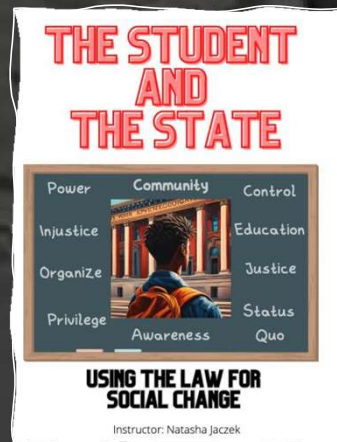
RESEARCH APPROACH

Surveys



Interviews

Three Case Studies



KEY QUESTIONS

**How is legal
consciousness
shaped?**



**How does it
interact with
legal
capability?**




**What role
does public
legal education
play?**



A photograph of a young child with blonde hair, wearing a grey jacket and pants, standing in front of a large, vibrant, and abstract painting. The painting is covered in various colors, lines, and shapes, including a prominent yellow figure. The child is looking at the artwork with interest.

EARLY INSIGHTS

- Relatability Matters
- Agency Matters
- Community Matters



“Focusing overwhelmingly on... reducing barriers to the system, modes to educate the public about the system and its rules...”

THANK YOU!

... can silence “a serious, deep, critical engagement with what justice would look like and what it would demand from all of us” ~Buhler