

Educating for Empowerment: co-constructing curriculum for social change

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ABSTRACT

In acknowledgement of the complex and globalised interplay of populist dynamics, increasing inequality, unprecedented numbers of people migrating and a catastrophic climate emergency, this paper reports on a project designed to empower young people (aged 14-25) to increase their political understanding and agency to promote a more active and justice oriented model of global citizenship. Our work draws on the social identity theories from social psychology, which advocate that educational interventions should help to cultivate a socially responsible, empowered and conscious social identity with norms that prescribe social and political action to bring about positive social change. The educational intervention we outline is co-designed by community development and youthwork practitioners, with young people for young people, and is intended to enable young people to become involved in positive political change – via mainstream political mobilization and/or electoral impact – as active justice oriented global citizens with a stake in the world.

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest contemporary threats to our capacity to build a social and economic framework that promotes and protects social justice is increasing political disillusion and disengagement. The rights of the most vulnerable are only upheld by the constant vigilance of empowered citizens willing to speak or act on their behalf. In the face of increasing political cynicism, apathy and isolation, we outline a project designed to empower young people (aged 14-25) to develop their own political understanding and agency. We wanted young people to understand their potential and capacity to be involved in positive political change – via mainstream political mobilization and/or electoral impact – as active citizens with a stake in the world.

In this paper we outline a project designed to build capacity, resources, tools and techniques – co-created with young people and designed for young people – to promote political participation and political agency for justice and inclusion. Our focus is on using existing research evidence to illustrate the ways that educators can augment their existing curriculum to promote knowledge, interest, and practices of active global citizenship.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section outlines our understanding of active citizenship and the role of citizenship education in fostering a sense of social responsibility and citizenship amongst young people. Particular attention is paid to

the insights that social psychology advances in relation to the development of active citizenship in terms of the potential benefits to individual, as well as societal well-being. The second section examines what the Social Identity approach can tell us about the educational circumstances in which this kind of citizenship identity is more likely to flourish. In section three, we outline the iterative process of co-construction by which we developed the curriculum content, with a brief overview of workshops, to demonstrate the kinds of activities, learning outcomes, method and rationale. Section four outlines the evaluation mechanism included in the programme with a view to illustrating how our activities can demonstrate outcomes convergent with active citizenship development. Finally, we conclude by summarising our contribution and outlining the next steps necessary to develop a broader evidence base for this intervention.

I CULTIVATING CITIZENSHIP – THE WHAT AND THE WHY

Over the last three decades, trust in political institutions such as parliaments or the courts has precipitously declined across the established democracies of North America and Western Europe (World Values Surveys, Waves 5 and 6, 2005–14). So too has voter turnout (*ibid*). As party identification has weakened and party membership has declined, citizens have become less willing to stick with establishment parties (Mudde, 2013). Instead, voters increasingly endorse single-issue movements, vote for populist candidates, or support ‘anti-system’ parties that define themselves in opposition to the status quo (Inglehart and Norris, 2016). Even in some of the richest and most politically stable regions of the world, it seems as though democracy is in a state of serious disrepair (Foa and Mounk, 2016). It is in this context that the need to develop positive models of active citizenship arises. This ambition transcends political/ideological divisions and is concerned with the more fundamental objective of supporting democratic systems of governance against the range of contemporary challenges they face.

Citizenship refers to the relationship between the individual and the state, in which the two are bound together by reciprocal rights and duties. Although there are many ways to define citizenship, the principle difference relates to alternative conceptualizations of citizenship as being shaped by individualism, or communitarianism (MacIntyre, 1981; Sandel, 1982). This paper is concerned with the latter. Whilst there are both socialist and conservative versions of communitarianism, both advance the the principle of ‘citizen duties’ as part of the unspoken bargain between the state’s provision of citizen rights and entitlements and the citizen’s duty to contribute to good governance, primarily through taxes, but often through a series of behaviours associated with ‘good citizenship’. The good citizen abides by laws, pays taxes and votes. The active citizen positively contributes to the common good, engaging in volunteer work and/or actively participating in democratic exercises, with the potential orientation towards influencing policy. Similarly, participation might be motivated by a desire to advance justice (Youniss, 2011).

Given the crucial role of social and political action to bring about positive social change, our study focuses on the ways that educators may develop an understanding of the conditions within the education context that stimulate active citizenship, (Thomas, McGarty & Mavor, 2009). Previous research has pointed to the role of formal (Beaumont, Colby, Ehrlich & Torney-Purta, 2006; Galston, 2001) and informal education (Kahne & Sporte, 2008) as important settings for encouraging citizenship. Citizenship or civic education can significantly increase learner's knowledge and skills, and boost expectations for future participation. Studies suggest democratic discussion and debate within the classroom help to instil the idea that everyday issues are political issues (Youniss, 2011). It is within this context that our project focuses on developing the goal of civic education as a means to encourage *informed* and *critically conscious* citizens, who know their own opinions and are able to express them, in ways that may be incorporated easily in existing civic curriculum.

The education literature demonstrates the importance of engendering a sense of social responsibility and citizenship identity among school pupils, as predictors of participation and citizenship later (Youniss, McLellan & Yates, 1997). Much of this work has drawn on developmental psychologist Eric Erikson's theory of developmental stages and explores civic identity development as an *individual achievement* accomplished during the adolescent period (Crocetti, Jahromi & Meeus, 2012). While an understanding of citizenship as personal identity development is important, the social identity approach suggests that citizenship may be *further enhanced* by an understanding of the social, collective aspects of citizenship identity development in the education context.

The Social Identity approach to developing citizenship

The social identity approach is an umbrella term given to two related theories, social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorisation theory (SCT; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Social identity theory suggests that people's sense of self is determined, in part, by the internalised sense of social identities associated with the social groups to which they belong. When such group memberships are psychologically meaningful and emotionally significant, they help individuals to understand themselves and their position in a set of social relationships. To self-categorize in terms of a given group membership means seeing the group and its members as an extension of themselves and this is a basis to feel included in the group and connected to other group members. This allows a shift in self-definition from 'I' and 'me' to 'us' and 'we'. We could, for example, identify as: women, wives and partners; or as Irish; or football supporters; or, as the current leader of Fine Gael suggests 'people who get up early in the morning' (*Irish Times*, Saturday May 20 2017). If a social identity is salient, then the norms, beliefs and values associated with this identity help structure thoughts and behaviour, affecting how we feel, what we say, and what we do in different situations. The social identity approach suggests that people strive to achieve or maintain a positive view of themselves by attempting to gain positive distinctiveness from others either as an individual in comparison to other individuals, or as group members by defining and positively differentiating their in-group from comparison outgroups.

A large body of research within the social identity approach to health illustrates that social identities and connections to others can be good for us: they can be a resource for improved self-esteem, psychological and mental wellbeing and even physical health (Haslam, Jetten, Cruwys, Dingle & Haslam, 2018; Jetten, Haslam, & Haslam, 2012). This 'social cure' research shows that groups that are positively valued can be a basis for giving and receiving social support, as well as a source of strength and social capital (Putnam, 1993, 1996, 2000). Social connections are often more important to health than behavioural factors such as not smoking, low alcohol, exercise, and not being obese (Holt-Lunstad & Colleagues, 2015; 2017). But not all groups are good for us. Groups can also be a source of low-status, stigma and social rejection in a phenomena known as the social curse (Kellzi & Reicher, 2012; Stevenson, McNamara & Muldoon, 2014).

SIT suggests a range of strategies that people engage in, *individual mobility, social creativity or collective action*, to cope with low-status or contest and challenge the status quo. People are much more likely to respond to low-status and stigmatised group memberships as an individual. This means they are likely to dis-identify and psychologically distance themselves from low-status groups. However, some low-status groups have used social creativity and collective action to challenge these low-status positions. Civil rights, feminist and gay pride movements are good examples of collective struggles that have enabled members of these minority groups to respond to discrimination and social rejection as 'politicised' group members rather than as individuals, taking their stigmatized group status and using it as a collective identity to support group solidarity and action for change (Volocchi, 2009; Home, 2010; Britt and Heise, 2000). Studies show that when minority group members are aware that the discrimination and rejection they experience is due to prejudice in relation to their group – as opposed to their own individual failings - they are more likely to identify with the group and that affiliation with this group identity can protect their well-being (Branscombe, Schmitt & Harvey, 1999; Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes & Garcia, 2014).

Self-categorisation theory extends this theorising by suggesting the conditions in which people will define themselves according to their particular group membership and the consequences of these self-definitions. The theory proposes that it is this internalised sense of social identity that makes group behaviour *possible* (Turner, 1982). It proposes that it is only when people in a given community identify and define themselves in terms of their shared group membership that they are able to work together to advance their collective interests. This self-categorisation process is *context sensitive*. Thus, whilst we may belong to a variety of social groups, the particular social identity that becomes a basis for self-definition is only salient when there is a *fit* of the category and a person's *readiness* to use it (Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994), which is typically context-specific. Finally, shared social identity is the basis of *mutual social influence* (Turner, 1991). That is, when people understand themselves as sharing a social identity in a given context, they strive to actively reach agreement and coordinate their behaviour to promote their shared group interests.

Often groups exhibit 'defining markers' as a short-hand way to symbolise the norms, values and beliefs of the group and help to promote and strengthen a shared sense of identity among group members. Current examples include the red 'make America great again' baseball caps and t-shirts worn by US President Donald Trump's support base versus the pink knitted kitten hats worn by the 'nasty' Women's movement in their opposition to Trump. Importantly, SCT argues that the form and content of self-categories, the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' and the norms that define us, are not fixed but are dynamic and can be negotiated in response to changes in context (Onorato & Turner, 2004). The shared social identity that groups provide may, or may not, provide the basis for positive and productive social interaction which is crucial in areas like citizenship development (Haslam, 2017). The examples above are perhaps extreme, but they serve to illustrate the power and potential that social identity may hold for positive and productive social interaction.

These insights have been tested in many fields, including organisational (Haslam, 2004), health (Haslam, Jetten, Cruwys, Dingle & Haslam, 2018) and political psychology (Reicher, 2004). They have also been applied in many disciplines beyond social psychology. Still, however, relatively little social identity research has been conducted to explore citizenship development in the classroom and in informal education (Thomas *et al*, 2017) and we hope that this paper provides a start in addressing that gap. By distinguishing between idiosyncratic personal identity and social identity, this approach suggests that when opinions about 'how the world should be' are developed as social identity (we) rather than personal identity (me), they gain power to effect social change (Thomas, McGarty, Stuart, Lala & Pedersen, 2017). That is they support the creation of an 'active justice oriented model of global citizenship'. Haslam (2017) goes as far as to argue that the success of the education and learning process depends upon the education participants seeing themselves as sharing a social identity, that is, in effect sharing a sense of 'us'. In the following section, we examine what the social identity literature has to say about the conditions required to support this transition.

II CONDUCTIVE CONDITIONS FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The social identity approach suggests that people actively search for meaning, they try to understand and make sense of their environment and their place within it. From this perspective the mind is an 'interpretive' system (McGarty, & Haslam, 1997). Applied to the education context, learning can be seen as an active pursuit of insight and growth. This means that under the right conditions, people will actively seek to make sense and interpret new information and experiences within the learning context (Platow, Mavor & Bizumic, 2017). It is important then to develop an understanding of what these right conditions are.

- ***Creating a positive common identity supports learning***

The social identity approach dismisses the notion of a stable self. Instead, self-definitions are flexible and can vary between individual, personal self and social self. Importantly the individual self is not privileged over the social self. Moreover, it appears that social-categories are integral to the learning process. Research has demonstrated the importance of internalised social identity for the learning process. In studies with university students for instance, the extent to which learners identify as 'university students' and feel that they belong to the student group, has implications for their learning approach and subsequent achievement. The stronger the student identity the more they embrace a deep learning approach, which has a positive effect on performance (Bliuc, Ellis, Goodyear, Muntele Hendres, 2011a; 2011b). In addition, the more a new student feels they are part of, and connected to, the student group, the more this identity can protect their well-being in the sometimes difficult transition to university (Iyer, Jetten, Tsivrikos, Postmes & Haslam, 2009; Jetten, Iyer, Tsivrikos & Young, 2008). This evidence base can inform interventions aimed at helping students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups, to feel they belong in university. Through targeted orientation programmes learners can construct identities (Bliuc, McGarty, Reynolds & Muntele, 2007), reject identities (Jetten, Branscombe, Schmitt & Spears, 2001) or reconstruct and change the meaning of identities.

- ***Creating a positive group identity supports collective action***

Active citizenship and civic participation concerns interests, values and actions that go beyond the immediate self, family and friends, to engagement and action for the benefit of members of other groups and the wider – potentially global - community. From a social identity perspective this means that these actions are underpinned by a self-definition that is social rather than personal (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In as much as civic participation activities (petition signing, blogging, awareness raising, grass-roots organising and voting) stem from ideologies and opinions about 'how the world should be', civic identities have been called opinion-based identities (McGarty, Lala, & Thomas, 2012; Smith, Thomas, & McGarty, 2015; Thomas & McGarty, 2009). By their nature, opinion-based groups are group memberships which promote norms and opinions about appropriate action. Studies show that opinion-based identities are reliable predictors of active citizenship behaviour. Moreover, the research suggests that collective efforts and momentum are more easily sustained when these opinion-based identities, and their normative content, are shared. Put differently, to be motivated to act, people need to believe, feel, and identify collectively (Olson, 1968; Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2009). But how are shared opinion-based identities formed?

- ***Fostering civic identity requires fostering group identity***

The Interactive Model of Social Identity Formation (Postmes, Haslam and Swaab, 2005) was developed to explain how social identity develops in small groups. The model proposes social identities form in two ways. A top down, deductive method a) small groups can develop a social identity from membership of an existing shared social category, and a bottom up inductive method b) social identity can develop from

intragroup interaction. In the deductive method, intergroup comparisons are made and according to a meta-contrast principle, differences within the shared social category are minimised and differences between the salient comparison groups are accentuated. In this way, contextual factors lead to a distinct identity. Of greater significance to understanding citizenship identity formation, however, is the inductive, bottom-up method of social identity formation. From this perspective, group members may actively engage in negotiations and discussions over who they are, the realities that the group is facing, and the norms and content that define their group (Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins, & Levine, 2006; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Inductive identity formation involves communication, emotion, negotiation, debate and deliberation.

Drawing on research that has long pointed to the role of emotion and efficacy beliefs as predictors of collective action, the interactive model of social identity formation has been used by scholars keen to explore how opinion-based groups that promote civic identities are developed (Van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004). Thomas, McGarty and Mavor's (2009) Normative Alignment Model suggests that communication and debate help small groups to integrate an understanding of the norms that define their group, their group-based emotions, their efficacy beliefs, and their opinions about appropriate actions. Normative alignment they argue, is a dynamic and iterative system of interrelations between these factors. Opinion-based groups are developed through discussion about norms of clearly defined attitudes, emotions and efficacy beliefs which favour civic participation, this content is likely to promote coordinated action, and these factors may sustain group cohesion overtime. Self-categorisation theory (Turner et al., 1987) points to the importance of group norms for shaping behaviour, therefore engaged citizenship will be appropriate to the extent that the social norms relevant to this identity prescribe such action.

- ***Common civic identities arise from a consensus of shared values***

Smith, Thomas and McGarty (2015) point to the role of norms and suggest that engaged civic identities develop through the 'identity-norms nexus' process. This process involves members of small groups engaging in reflection and discussion about contemporary social issues. They suggest that this process will inevitably invoke a normative conflict between descriptive norms (what most people do) and injunctive norms (what people should do). This normative conflict is important in the development of citizenship identities. Still, however, not all communication, reflection and debate within a group setting will lead to commitment to citizenship and civic participation. Research demonstrates that the motivation to commit to social change stems from groups gaining *co-ordinated* and *validated, agreement* about injunctive norms (how things should be) and this becomes the basis for a new shared social identity focused on social change (Thomas & McGarty, 2009; McGarty, Thomas, Lala, Smith & Bliuc, 2014; McGarty, Lala & Thomas, 2012). Reaching a consensually shared position allows group members to form a set of socially shared cognitions (Hardin & Higgins, 1996), which increases their confidence to take action (Smith & Postmes, 2011). Where the new social change identity stems from agreed injunctive norms, active citizenship and civic participation becomes an expression of that new social

change identity. To add to this, empowerment also occurs when participants are able to express a shared social identity (Drury & Reicher, 2000; 2005).

Research shows that experience with organisations that provide remedies for social problems such as, soup kitchens or homeless shelters, are an opportunity for participants to realise their agency and social responsibility to others, as well as acknowledging their part in political processes (Youniss, McLellan & Yates, 1997). Similarly, work in crowd psychology finds that empowerment is a process that occurs when taking part in collective action that is understood as an expression of a shared social identity (Drury & Reicher, 2000; 2005). Research by Drury and Reicher (1999) shows that the realisation of a common, unified social identity led to expectations of mutual goals and mutual support in reaching those goals in the protest context. Other work has emphasized the way that social identities are actively constructed through a process of communication and debate to bring about intergroup helping and solidarity (Reicher, et. al, 2006; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

III CREATING A CURRICULUM

The programme that we describe arises from the intersection of inductive and deductive research approaches. Whilst the more deductive theoretical underpinnings of our approach are outlined above, we began the project in a much more inductive way, as a collaborative project between youth workers and academics interested to facilitate young people's interest in active citizenship for social justice. In a series of regular meetings, over the course of a year, the group co-designed a series of activities for young people (Adshead, Jackman, Real, & Saude, 2017). These activities were first piloted in local schools and in the following two years were offered to local community groups and youth groups. The curriculum content discussed here is a distillation of what was learned in all of these sessions and the result of several more iterations of the workshop activities to devise a programme content that best combines the collective wisdom from all of our perspectives. Feedback from participants in our most recent workshop series, in Spring 2019 with Tipperary Comhairle na nÓg, is available in their annual report (Tipperary Comhairle na nÓg, 2019)¹.

Our approach is informed by the Social Identity approach and inductive models of identity development in small groups with a significant emphasis on the role of discussion and agreement in social identity formation. From this perspective, social identities are about *being* - realised through intergroup doing, and about *becoming* - realised through intragroup interaction (Van Zomeren, Postmes & Spears, 2008). Our curriculum is designed *not only to impart content* but to also to create the conditions – in terms of intra group doing and inter group becoming – to interact over time and in an iterative way to reinforce the normative content of empowerment and social

¹ We wish to record our thanks to Tipperary Comhairle na nÓg and especially to Pauline Strappe, Tipperary Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator, for making this possible.

responsibility towards an 'active justice oriented model of global citizenship' in the process of social change identity formation.

- **Design principles**

This is a short course, comprising 6 hour long interactive workshops. It is offered to youth and community groups and intended to stimulate active citizenship. The inputs from young people, youth workers and social psychology all stressed the importance of creating an informal, comfortable space that fosters young peoples' confidence to participate. When using a classroom, for example, it is important to re-arrange the space in order to send a clear signal that 'this workshop presents a break from the traditional school room lesson'. Much of the workshop content is activity focused: games and quizzes are used to help break down barriers to participation. In these ways, we hoped to identify the space as a 'safe place' for discussion.

The workshops are designed to create supported spaces for young people to develop their political understanding in a way that is inclusive, creative, a little bit subversive, diverse, respectful and fun. The course does not promote any particular political view over another. The goal is for young people to work out their own views and to understand how they can incorporate them into their everyday life. As such the ambition of the course is to enable young people to realise their collective agency. Learning outcomes are primarily affective and skills related in terms of active and participatory citizenship behaviour (see below).

- **Learning Outcomes**

Our approach to learning draws on Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and is participatory, democratic and informal. We endeavour to facilitate active learning through fun activities and shared experiences so as to create participatory spaces where learners have the freedom to speak, challenge and respectfully disagree. This approach is activity heavy and content light. The intention is to stimulate curiosity for self-direction and this is supported with plenty of further resources. For traditional teachers, stripping away such a large amount of content is shocking, but it is worth remembering that much of the learning in this programme is concerned with social change identity development, group dynamics and processes. These processes are stimulated by discussion and debate which are reinforced by resources and are likely to occur when participants are supported and given the opportunity to interact. Moreover, it is worth asking how much of the content delivered in a more traditional classes is fully absorbed, and whether it has any impact in developing a shared sense of identity among participants.

Knowledge

Broadly, the workshops explore and aim to develop values towards social responsibility, ethical practice and critical consciousness in order to promote discussion and debate concerning justice and sustainability in community contexts.

The learning outcome that is desired here is not an extensive knowledge about political action and social movements, which might be an impressive abstract expertise; but rather an appreciation and understanding of the practical possibilities for social change. Much of the content that is included is illustrative of various collective actions for social change including, for example, the quiz activities detailed below (where participants must relate a political artefact or action to its associated societal ambition).

Participants will develop capacity to seek new opportunities to address commonly identified social and political issues within their communities. They will be encouraged to see the connections between local and international and global issues and workout and agree upon ways to overcome barriers to tackling issues to bring about social and political change.

Affective

Learning outcomes include empathy, positive agency and sense of empowerment. Activities are designed to build trust among the group and the confidence to express emotions and opinions about political issues that matter to them. The aim is also for participants to gain a sense of connection to each other and belonging to the group and connection to broader justice oriented social movements that are outside the workshop.

The intention is that participants develop capacity and routes for engagement between youth workers, young people and academic researchers to address the deficit in young peoples' capacity and agency to be effective advocates and agents for democratic renewal, political engagement and the promotion of social justice.

Workshop 1: Being Political

In this workshop we explore participant's ideas about politics and the political. The group work is designed to highlight the mismatch between participant's understanding of what politics is about – typically their ideas about the concerns and interests of the 'political system' versus their concerns and interests in their own familial, social and community contexts. The workshop is designed to develop a clearer conceptualisation of political action where 'being political' means being involved in the things that you care about. By lowering the threshold of what constitutes 'the political' participants are encouraged to believe that they too have the capacity for action – albeit in a local, familial or community context.

Activities and Group Work, workshop 1

The bicycle

Using a cardboard cut-out of a bicycle frame, two large cardboard wheels are stuck to the wall. These wheels facilitate a two-part discussion. Participant answers are written on thin strips of paper, which are used to fill

in the bicycle spokes. The first discussion, filling out the first wheel, explores participants' ideas about *What is Politics?* The second discussion, filling out the back wheel of the bicycle, explores participants answers to the question *What matters to you?* Once completed, the summary of the discussion focuses on the mismatch between our ideas of politics (how things are) and the things that concern us (how things should be). A bicycle is propelled by pedals that connect the back wheel.

This exercise facilitates a discussion of politics in a fun and non-threatening way. The collage is fun to make and prevents the discussion focusing on 'the right answers, which might occur if we tried to discuss politics in another way.

Active Citizenship Quiz

Participants are shown a series of images / photos, concerning group actions to advance social justice – some historical and others more contemporary. In a 'pub quiz' style, teams of participants are asked to match the action to the issue. Further information on all of the images is supplied in the resource pack supporting this workshop.

Rationale

Activities are discursive and fun, with two-fold ambition: first to help create a safe and comfortable space which will break the ice and foster participants trust and the confidence to speak. The second is to allow a normative conflict to develop between descriptive norms and injunctive norms. Working together on the spokes for the first wheel participants discuss and express their opinions about the way things are in politics (descriptive norms). Then they discuss and describe their concerns about political issues that matter to them and how things should be (injunctive norms). This mis-match is the normative conflict that will help to foster the new shared social change identity amongst participants. This space is designed also to begin to build norms of social responsibility and empowerment as identity content that will develop across the programme.

Workshop 2: What motivates action?

This workshop is intended to: explore emotions that motivate action and the personal satisfaction that is gained by being involved in group action. The workshop is also intended to illustrate the different forms of active citizenship that are possible. Workshop resources provide further information about organisations and issues presented in this workshop. Activist presenters are guided to focus on their personal motivation and rewards concerning their activity. In doing so, the workshop explores

some of the health benefits that are associated with feelings of belonging and connection to active citizenship groups.

Activities and Group Work, workshop 2

Activists Motivations

In this workshop we invite 3 local activists involved with different organisations to give the group a short presentation about what motivates them to get involved. Local activists are chosen because they present relatable examples of real-life action, this is empowering. It is striking that for all of the activists who have presented to our groups to date, whilst support for their interest is a given; their motivation for action has in all cases been about overcoming personal and mental health, struggles. To date, the reasons given for action have included: combatting stress; relieving anxiety; channelling aggressive feelings into positive peaceful action; proving oneself and overcoming personal challenges; boosting confidence; being social and having fun.

Group reflection

Participants are given a bundle of emotions (laminated card emoji images) and a glue stick. The discussion takes place in three parts and is designed to highlight: participant feelings; participant activities; participant ambitions. Three separate posters are used to reflect and record each stage of the discussion, enabling the group to summarise their views.

- Poster One concerning participant feelings: Participants are asked to choose an emoji sticker to reflect how they feel about an issue of personal concern.
viz. I feel [emoji sticker] when [cause of this emotion].
- Poster Two concerning participant activities: Participants are asked to choose an activity that they engage in and an emoji sticker to reflect the way the activity makes them feel.
viz. Doing [..action/activity.] makes me feel [emoji sticker].
- Poster Three concerning next steps / future actions: Participants are asked to list the things that they are interested in pursuing,
viz. I'm interested in [participants list]

Rationale

When people get angry, worried or sad, it is important to acknowledge the emotion and express empathy rather than ignoring the emotion, or moving straight into problem solving, distracting, giving advice or making suggestions.

Acknowledgement and empathy can be achieved with a short sentence naming the possible emotion, checking out whether this is true and providing the space to show that we care about individual struggles.

Once acknowledgement and empathy has occurred, participants can move into problem solving.

There are powerful benefits to acknowledging and empathising with emotions:

The person hears two essential messages:

- You are cared about and noticed here
- Emotions are not dangerous things: we can have them; we can speak about them, and still be ok

When a person hears someone else express their emotions, this increases the chance they will feel more able to identify and express their emotions for themselves next time.

Because social justice and social responsibility involve thinking about and having concern for others who are often outside our in-groups, this activity focuses on and aims to develop participants understanding and empathy. Empathy is an important conducive condition for social responsibility.

Workshop 3: Making connections

In this workshop participants are provided with the space to reflect on what they have heard and understood from the previous workshops: in particular the connections that can be made between local activities and global issues. The workshop is designed to facilitate participants to explore their own interests and priorities.

Activities and Group Work, workshop 3

Artefact Quiz:

Participants are shown a series of artefacts, concerning group actions to advance social justice – some local and others international. The artefacts selected reflect as wide a range of activists groups as possible (songs, hats, dresses, badges, wrist bands, letters, postcards). In a ‘pub quiz’ style, teams of participants are asked to match the artefact to the issue. Further information on all of the artefacts and associated issues is supplied in the resource pack supporting this workshop.

Group reflection

This activity mirrors the emotion poster work carried out in the last workshop.. Three separate posters are introduced sequentially enabling the small groups to discuss, agree and summarise their discussions. The groups map out their answers on each poster. For each question, groups were given 10 minutes to answer them.

- **Poster One: What do you care about?**
The intention of this question is to direct participants attention to action in their own lives in a pragmatic way. First they list all the causes they care about, which may be local, regional, national, or global and ranging from politics to environment.
- **Poster Two: What are the challenges when addressing what you care about?**
The intention of this question is to identify what kinds of barriers and/or challenges they feel might get in the way when seeking to address the causes they listed above.
- **Poster Three: What can you do about it?**
This question is designed to develop practical responses and/or actions to addressing the challenges and engaging in actions.

Rationale

This exercise aims to enable participants to make connections between local and global issues and learn about local and global social justice movements. The artefact exercise helps participants to identify the important role that symbols play in collective struggles, and how these markers of identity unify and strengthen the connection between disparate individual strangers into a collective social movement. Finally, by breaking down the issues, challenges and practical ways to overcome barriers the last exercise aims to engender a sense of social responsibility and empowerment among participants because it gives them a chance to discuss and agree strategies for change.

Workshop 4: sharing stories

This session is intended to provide a fun, 'safe' and non-judgemental space to discuss a range of topical issues with personal and emotional relevance.

Activities and Group Work, workshop 4

Group reflection

Groups of 3-4 are given a large sheet of paper. One member of each group lies on the floor whilst the other two or three draw around the outline of their body. The body outline forms the basis for a focused discussion:

Eyes: Participants identify something they have seen that has provoked them: Can you describe an observation or experience of a social or political issue that affected you? Something that made you question the way the world works?

Heart: Discuss/ describe how did/does this make you feel?

Head: Decide together what you've learned – what do you think was going on? How do you understand that incident? Can you share your learning with the group?

Hands: What should be done?

Feet: Next steps? What can be done? What can you do?

Rationale

For this session participants need to feel comfortable enough to express their feelings and emotions about issues they care about and to have a 'deeper' discussion. It is therefore deliberately positioned later in the programme to allow enough time for a rapport and connection to develop among the group. This safe and intimate space is designed to foster stronger connections among the group. Also the breakdown of topics for discussion including a 'what can be done' section is a conducive condition for a shared sense of social change identity to develop among participants because it allows for step by step planning and interaction.

Workshop 5: Moving Debate and Mock Election

In this workshop, participants are prepared to engage in the electoral process, taking a series of issues and enabling participants to work out both their own position and their political representatives' positions on the issues in a fun and entertaining way.

Activities and Group Work, workshop 5

Moving debate with local representatives

Taking the issues that participants identified in workshops 3 and 4, we use information from local Voter Advice Apps (<http://www.whichcandidate.ie/>) to identify 3 or 4 alternative positions on each issue selected, including those of the local representative. Participants engage in a moving debate to map out their position on the issues and those of their representatives. We like to use candidate election posters to cut-out large-scale headshots of local politicians. We find that debates are much enlivened when participants try to guess political positions by moving large laminate heads of local politicians.

Mock Election

We run a mock election, enabling participants to fill out ballot papers and trace the electoral process – from the identification of the constituency quota, through the vote transfers, to the assigning of seats. The ballot papers used in the mock election are made up using relevant local candidate information and designed to look as close as possible to a real ballot paper. The aim is to demonstrate in an informal and friendly way, how the Irish electoral system works and the significance of the Single Transferable Vote (STV) transfer system

Rationale

The aim of this workshop is to consolidate the learning from previous sessions. In the bicycle session participants identified the mismatch or normative conflict between

their perception of the political system on the one hand and their concerns about political issues on the other. They then explored social justice movements, local and global issues and their deeply held concerns about social and political issues. In this session participants get to grips with party positions on the issues that matter to them and ascertain local candidates that they align and identify with. The aim is to demystify the electoral process and educate about local representation. The intention is to validate participants concerns and empower them to become active in the political process by exercising their shared sense of identity.

Workshop 6: Public Exhibition of 'Be Heard' work

In this final session, participants present the work that they have created across the programme in a public exhibition with invited local representatives. This is an opportunity for all of those who have participated in the programme to speak with local representatives and make their voice heard.

Rationale.

The purpose of this session is for participants to demonstrate their learning and capacity to the wider community and to express their shared concerns about political issues that matter to them. This public exhibition is empowering because it allows participants to register their feelings with people who are in positions of power and to whom votes count. Through this collective interaction with local representatives, participants begin to realise that they can actually make a difference. They become transformed when they are able to enact their shared identities.

IV EVALUATING IMPACT

The workshops are accompanied by an evaluation tool that has been co-designed in partnership with our community collaborators. The aim is to collect quantitative data longitudinally in order to assess the extent to which this workshop series achieves its objectives. Participants are provided with a short survey questionnaire to complete at the start of the programme and again at the end. Participants scores are tracked from time one to time two in order to explore if their scores on the measures have changed and / or positively increased between the time points. If positive changes are found on participant's scores then the longitudinal design allows for causal inferences to be made about the education intervention. The survey contains nine validated and reliable, measures which are intended to explore the constructs we believe are important in the development of an active, justice oriented model of global citizenship.

Social change identity (Leach et al., 2008), measures a sense of in-group identification and is captured with four items or statements including for example; 'I feel connected to others who are concerned about social change'.

Global social responsibility (Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Alisat, 2007) is measured with four items including for example; 'I have an important role to play in bringing more justice to the world'. *Political orientation* (Costello, 2017) includes six items that tap into political opinion for example; 'There should be free health care for all'. *Right-wing authoritarianism* (Funke, 2005), is measured with two items worded to capture a low level of this construct including; 'It is important to protect the right to protest'. *Populism* (Akkerman, Mudde, & Zaslove, 2014) is measured with four items including; 'Politicians need to follow the will of the people'.

Critical reflection (Diemer, Rapa, Park, & Perry, 2017) aims to assess participants consciousness about social inequality and is measured with four items including; 'Social and economic inequalities exist because the system is stacked in favour of some groups'. *Self-efficacy* (Bandura, 2006) explores participants personal agency and is measured with four items including; 'If I put in the effort I can make a positive difference in the world'.

Collective empowerment (Rogers, Chamberlin, Ellison, & Crean, 1997) captures empowerment at the group level and is measured with four items including; 'If we work together we can have a positive effect on the wider community'. Finally, *political participation* (Morais, & Ogden, 2011; Richardson, 2003) items are in relation to behavioural intentions and are measured with nine items such as; in the future I will, 'Display and/or wear badges/stickers/signs that promote a more just and equitable world'. Participants are asked to respond on a five point likert type response scale ranging from 1 strongly disagree, 2 agree a little, 3 neutral, 4 disagree a little, 5 strongly disagree.

V CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

This project was conceived of as a practical pro-democratic response to the rise of populism and as a means to address the increasing political disillusionment cited by many young people as a reason for their political disengagement. In doing so, the ambition of the project is two-fold: first and foremost, as a means to empower young people to develop their own political understanding and agency - for the preservation, protection and promotion of equality and human rights via mainstream political mobilization and electoral impact. And secondly, to demonstrate how collaboration between proactive academics and youth and community groups can combine practical and experiential knowledge with research insights to deliver evidence based and evaluated peer to peer learning, enabling the creation of practical resources by young people, to help address the significant economic, environmental and geo-political challenges that their generation faces. In doing so, we hope to demonstrate that a collaborative, cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approach is better able to grapple with such a complex challenge.

Our project was conceived and co-designed by participating partners working in community development, youth-work, political science and social psychology and

implemented in partnership from start to finish. As not for profit and state organizations, we are keen to demonstrate how complementary and collaborative partners can address issues of public concern in ways that maximize their impact and efficacy. By sharing our experience and expertise, we wish to combat stereotypical attitudes towards young people regarding their capacity and commitment to be involved in positive political change.

In this paper, we have argued that understanding in this area benefits from social psychological theory and we have used the social identity approach to build a model of pro-change citizenship identity development. Our intervention demonstrates that when young people broaden their understanding of political activity, beyond the party-political and institutional, to include less formal forms of active citizenship to safeguard identified citizen interests, they are more inclined to see themselves as having political agency and influence. Moreover, when young people actively engage with political issues in terms of social identity (we), rather than personal identity (me), they feel more powerful to effect change. Whilst political science may point to the importance of collective action for social change, social identity approaches help us to understand how collective participation and empowerment is enabled.

With this in mind, our project is now focused on expanding our evidence base, by increasing the number of cases studies involved and administering the evaluation survey outlined above. The rationale for case selection is based on the primacy of a co-constructed pro-democratic participatory pedagogical approach, which we hypothesize will foster participatory learning and social identity development with empowerment and social responsibility as collective and shared norms and identity content. The programmes chosen use a variety of participative methods to build capacity and confidence including photography, dance, film and theatre and may all be identified by their commitment to positive social change. If you are involved in this kind of programme, we'd be happy to include you in our research.

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