

Why riot? Community, choices, aspirations



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<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/why-riot-community-choices-aspirations/content-section-overview>

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Introduction and guidance

Introduction and guidance

Why riot? is a collaboration between the Action for Community Transformation Initiative in Belfast (ACT) and The Open University.

This free online course was co-produced over a 12 month period, by The Open University in Ireland's Time to Think initiative and ACT, in response to the riots that took place in the Shankill and other Loyalist communities in Northern Ireland in the spring of 2021.

Why riot? is based on a face-to-face course and workshops developed by William Mitchell a Loyalist ex-prisoner, former Open University student, and project director of the ACT Initiative in the Shankill. It was made with eight boys taking part in the ACT Initiative and Belfast Boys' Model School project: Adam, Ashton, Brandon, Dylan, Matty, Ryan, Stephen and William. This online course draws specifically on the experiences of these teenage boys from the Shankill, a Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist area in Belfast City and one of many communities deeply affected by the legacy of violent conflict in and about Northern Ireland. It has however been designed to be a flexible resource that can be adapted to different contexts of social and political division and taught in a range of individual and group settings and to diverse audiences and communities.

This course is divided into 3 sessions:

- Session 1 is about community
- Session 2 is about choices
- Session 3 is about aspirations.

The whole course is approximately 12 hours long. Each of the 3 sessions can be broken down into four 45-minute teaching sections or workshops. This course can be taught in small groups, or you can study it on your own on a computer or smartphone.

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- consider how external factors shape personal identity and choices
- ask questions and think critically about information
- explore different perspectives
- broaden thoughts about the future and develop a voice to work with others for a positive change.

Guidance for facilitators and teachers

If you are doing this as an individual learner, move on to the next section.

Why riot? Community, choices, aspirations has been designed to support critical thinking skills amongst young people aged 14+ and is for use in community, school, alternative and independent settings. The course is for young people, especially those growing up in contexts of social or political division and who may be at risk of engaging in violence and offers alternative pathways for making their voice heard around issues that concern them.

You are encouraged, as course facilitators and teachers, to explore the full course yourself, in advance of using it with young people to familiarise yourself with the course structure and themes of community, choices and aspirations, and its range of resources including media clips and interactive activities. This will allow you to work creatively and dynamically with this material and adapt it to your context and to identify where questions are explored in more depth at different points in the course.

Preparation

Sign up to the course by clicking on the 'enrol now' button, which is on the right-hand column on the [course description page](#), and on the top, middle banner throughout the course. Then complete the course to get to know its structure and range of resources available to you. You will know you are enrolled on the course by seeing the text: 'You're enrolled! This course has now been added to your OpenLearn Profile' on the About this free course box.

About this free course



12 hours study



Level 1: Introductory

Ratings ☆☆☆☆☆

0 out of 5 stars

You're enrolled!

This course has now been added to your OpenLearn Profile.



View your profile

- Familiarise yourself with the case study central to this course – namely, the violent disturbances in the streets of Belfast in the summer of 2021 and the experiences of some boys involved in or affected by these disturbances, from the Shankill, a Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist area in Belfast, Northern Ireland.
- Think about the context in which you work, whether this case study resonates, how to use or adapt this case study, or introduce an appropriate case study in your setting alongside how you would structure your teaching/facilitating around this, especially if working with a different kind of group or context.

For the media assets, download an offline (Epub3) version of the course or alternatively, the specific media assets you plan to use onto your laptop/PC, if you want to use these resources in a location with slow or unreliable internet. You can do this by looking for the 'Download this course' box, which appears in the left-hand column on the course description page, and then consistently in the right-hand column throughout the course. To download individual assets, there is a download option underneath the specific asset.

Download this course

Download this course for use offline or for other devices



Word



Kindle



PDF



Epub 2

[See more formats >](#)

Where to teach?

The course can be used in any setting you feel works for your group. For example:

- As an online resource to support group work (blended learning), for example in a community centre, youth club or school classroom setting.
- As an offline resource for use in an independent or detached setting where young people meet/spend time. You can do this by looking for the 'Download this course' box, which appears in the left-hand column on the course description page, and then consistently in the right-hand column throughout the course.
- As a resource for learners to log in and study themselves at home, whether on a smartphone or computer.

How to teach?

How you teach it is up to you, but below are some suggestions:

- Be creative and dynamic in how you teach this material, drawing on your own ways of teaching.
- Enhance or supplement the course material with your own material, local case studies or other resources where appropriate.
- When teaching in group settings, or when working offline you may choose to explore creative alternatives to a written submission with young people. You could take this approach in particular, for the reflection activity at the end of each session ([Community](#), [Choices](#) and [Aspirations](#)) to encourage learners to think about the core themes of the session, and what they have learned.

Course activities and completion

This course can be completed in different ways depending on what is appropriate to your setting. For example:

- By an individual learner working independently online (as they would do with a traditional Open University OpenLearn course). To gain an OpenLearn statement of participation, learners register with OpenLearn to create their individual learner's profile, enrol on the course, and work their way through the course.
- By groups working with a facilitator or a teacher, using a learning profile set up by the facilitator to submit collective/group responses in each of the activities.
- Or a mix of both independent and group working in which the learner participates in group sessions but also completes the course themselves online to gain an individual OpenLearn statement of participation.

Your feedback

This course is currently in a pilot phase, and we are interested in learning how it is being used by educators like you. If you want to share your ideas on how you are using the course, the young people you are working with, or settings you are teaching it in, or if you want to stay in touch about *Why riot?* course development, we would love to hear from you. Please contact us (the ACT and Open University *Why riot?* team) at The Open University in Ireland Time to Think email: Ireland-Time-to-Think@open.ac.uk

Sources of support

As you study *Why riot? Community, choices, aspirations*, please be aware that the course contains a broad range of material relating to the experience of life in local communities in situations of conflict. It also addresses decision making around protesting and rioting and includes some opportunities for personal reflection on choices, identity and values. For some course participants, aspects of the content may be sensitive or 'triggering' in nature, with the potential to cause emotional distress, particularly if it resonates with negative personal experiences, or the experiences of others known to you.

If you notice a negative emotional reaction to aspects of the course materials, leading to you feeling low or anxious, you may wish to step away from the materials, to reflect and to think about whether to continue at this time. Although feeling distress can be unpleasant, we are also naturally curious about the experiences of others who may have been in similar situations at some point in their life and continuing with your learning may be beneficial in helping you to develop a better understanding of the situations you were in and of the decisions you took. If you experience an ongoing impact on your sense of wellbeing, you might consider seeking support from a trusted person, or seeking help through counselling, or from your own GP (doctor).

If you are based in the UK and feel you need any professional help to deal with the issues this course discusses, these agencies will be pleased to offer advice. Many of these resources are available not only in England and Wales but also in Scotland and Northern Ireland. There is also a list with additional/specific services for Northern Ireland/Scotland below.

Helplines and online support: England and Wales

Mind – Details of local Minds, other local services, and Mind's Legal Advice Line.

- 0300 123 3393 (Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm)
- <http://mind.org.uk/>
- <https://sidebyside.mind.org.uk/> A friendly, supportive online community for people experiencing a mental health problem

Samaritans – 24-hour emotional support for anyone struggling to cope.

- 24-hour Freephone helpline: 116 123
- Email: jo@samaritans.org
- <https://www.samaritans.org/>

Childline – The UK's free, 24-hour helpline for children and young people (up to age 18).

- <https://www.childline.org.uk/>
- 24-hour Freephone helpline: 0800 1111 (telephone number will not show up on your phone bill)

Counselling (in person or online)

Counselling can sometimes be accessed by contacting your GP, or you may opt to see a counsellor in private practice. Details of counsellors working in private practice across all areas across the UK can be found here:

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy – BACP is a membership body for counsellors and therapists. They provide information on different types of therapy, and you can search for a therapist by area.

- <https://www.bacp.co.uk/>
- [Counselling Directory](#) – connects you with professional counsellors and therapists near you to help you find the help you need.

Northern Ireland

- In Northern Ireland, the main 24 hour telephone support is:
<https://www.lifelinehelpline.info/>
- This is a directory of services in Northern Ireland relating to a wide range of issues: <https://www.mindingyourhead.info/>
- This website provides phone numbers and information about helplines in Northern Ireland: <https://www.helplinesnetworkni.com/>
- For people affected by the Troubles/Conflict in Northern Ireland (including rioting):
[Wave Trauma Centre](#)

Scotland

SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health) provide local services in addition to information about mental ill health and signposting to other organisations.

- Phone: 0141 530 1000
- <https://www.samh.org.uk/>

Breathing Space - Breathing Space is a free and confidential phoneline service for any individual who is experiencing low mood or depression.

- Helpline: 0800 83 85 87

Moving around the course

In the 'Summary' at the end of each session, you will find a link to the next session. If at any time you want to return to the start of the course, click on 'Full course description'. From here you can navigate to any part of the course.

It's also good practice if you access a link from within a course page, to open it in a new window or tab. That way you can easily return to where you've come from without having to use the back button on your browser.

You will probably want to make notes as you go along, so choose your preferred method for this, either writing in a notebook or on your computer or tablet. There are free response box options inside some of the activities. Please note anything you add into these boxes will be saved for you to return to, provided you are signed into OpenLearn and enrolled on the course. But the information saved is only accessible to you and cannot be viewed by anyone else. You can collate and download all of your answers and notes for the course by clicking 'Download your answers for the documents on this course', which is on the left-hand column of the course.

The activities have individual timings, this is an approximate, suggested time that the activity might take. If working through the course as a group rather than individually, you might want to consider doubling the suggested timings, to allow for discussions.

Enrolling on the course will track your progress and give you the opportunity to earn your OpenLearn statement of participation. Statements are not accredited by The Open University but they're a great way to demonstrate your interest in the subject and commitment to your learning and your career, and to provide evidence of continuing professional development. Once you are signed in, you can manage your OpenLearn statement of participation online from My OpenLearn. In addition, you can download and print it.

To gain a statement of participation, you need to read every page of the course, including the introduction and guidance sections. You will be notified by email if you have received a statement of participation but please allow up to 24 hours for this to happen.

You can now go to [Session 1](#).

Session 1: Community

Introduction

‘And I said to my mates. Do you know what you are rioting for?’

Matty (Aged 15)

In the spring of 2021 young people from mainly Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist (PUL) communities across Northern Ireland from Derry/Londonderry to Belfast, took part in street riots. Buses and cars were burned, bricks and stones were thrown at the **PSNI** and young people from PUL and Catholic/Nationalist/Republican (CNR) communities also clashed. Several young people were arrested, and these events quickly made the international news. The Shankill is where the boys involved in the making of this course, live. Their area is featured in this news report and is where some of the worst rioting took place.



Figure 1: Bus burning in the Shankill, Belfast, April 2021 (Image: Hugh Pollock)

To get started, have a go at Activity 1.

Activity 1: Why do people riot?

15 minutes

Now watch Video 1, which is a BBC News report on the riots in Northern Ireland in 2021. Then write down your thoughts on the following questions.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1: Worst violence in Belfast for years as British and Irish leaders call for calm



What are some of the reasons given in the news report for the rioting by young people?

Provide your answer...

Why do you think young people get involved in riots like this?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Many different reasons were given in this news report. The reporter mentions political issues such as **Brexit** and **sectarian violence** and the recent history of the conflict in Northern Ireland. One resident also stated that young people were being influenced by their politicians into taking part in the violence. But how did you get on with thinking about the young people themselves and their reasons for being involved in rioting? That's what you are going to explore next.

Now read Matty and Dylan's comments on why they think young people from their community rioted. Remember when reading that this is how Matty and Dylan feel, from their perspective, and there will be other views on these issues across the different communities, depending on whose perspective you hear.

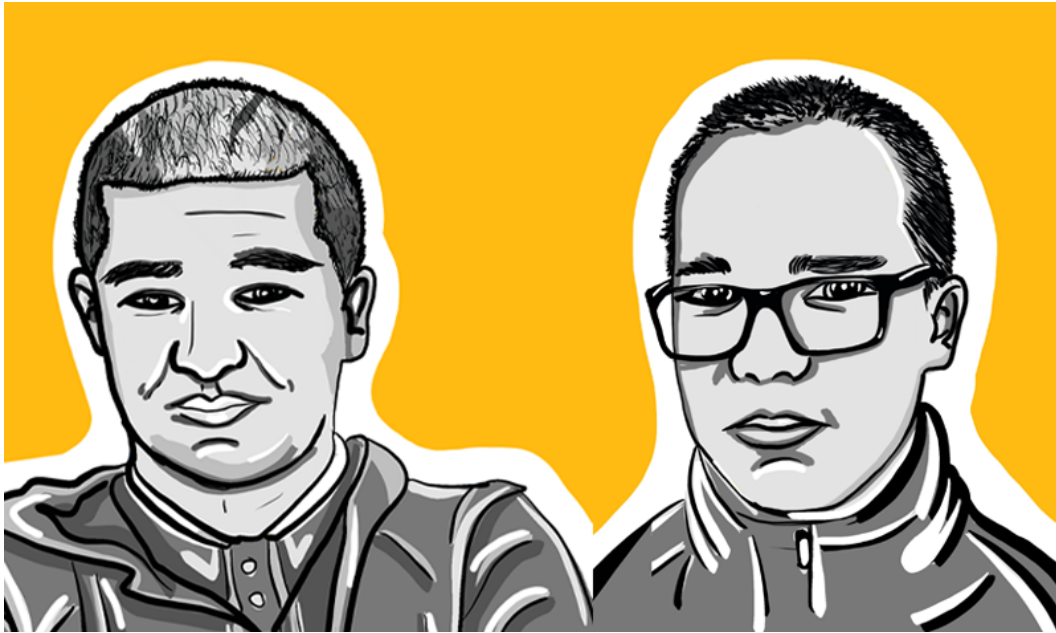


Figure 2: Illustration of Matty (left) and Dylan (right)

Read through Dylan and Matty's views and then answer the following questions.

Dylan

'I didn't think it was good but that was the only way young people could get heard by going out and lifting the bottle so they could. Because it's not like everyone has this opportunity to speak. Most people just rely on going out of the house and looking for a riot and going and throwing a few bricks and then the trouble starts and then think that's how to get their voice heard until they are sitting in the back of a wagon [police van] and going down to Musgrave [a city centre police station] and having to ask a few questions. Why were they there? And why were they doing it? Why were they doing it is the question?'

Matty

'Northern Ireland is being split off from England, Scotland and Wales by an Irish sea border. So, people are feeling angry that they are being separated from other British people if you know what I mean. Another factor in the riots was that the Protestant community [Matty's community] was sort of treated differently by the PSNI (local police force). That was another sort of reason why young people were letting their frustration out because the police were treating the **Loyalist** protestant community differently than the nationalist **Republican** community [a neighbouring community] I wouldn't use violence, but I can understand why some people are using violence because they are being treated differently and their voice is not being heard. Because before the riots, we peacefully protested ... and it just wasn't working. So, people just thought a way to get their voice heard was violence. I can understand it, I can understand it.'

1. What reasons do Matty and Dylan give about why young people might choose to riot in their community?
2. How did Matty and Dylan's reasons compare with your own thoughts?

3. Did anything surprise you about what they said?

1.2.3.

Discussion

Both Matty and Dylan make clear they would not choose violence themselves, but they can understand it. From Matty's perspective he feels young people are hearing about political events that affect their community and their concerns about the impact of these events on their community are not being listened to. He also talks about young people in his community feeling they are being treated differently to young people in other communities. (Remember, young people from Catholic/Nationalist/Republican (CNR) communities were also involved in some of this rioting and might have different perspectives on this issue). Both Matty and Dylan say that rioting was one of the few options available to young people in their area and that it was something young people 'rely on' to get their voice heard (that it is an established way of acting). But both boys are also asking questions about the choices young people make.

While Matty and Dylan feel young people have grievances you may have noticed that both are also asking young people to take a moment to think more deeply, to question themselves and consider why are they rioting. In this course you will have a chance to explore this and other questions. As you work your way through this course, you will have the opportunity to consider your own thoughts on these issues as well as exploring alternative ways of **protesting** or making your voice heard, without using violence and putting yourself and others at risk.

By the end of Session 1, you should be able to:

- think about how you see yourself and your identity
- think about how others see you and your community
- explore what community means to you and your identity
- think about how all these factors can shape the options you have and the choices you make.

Protecting your mental health and wellbeing

Please refer to the [Sources of support](#) page if you notice a negative emotional reaction to aspects of the course materials. You may wish to step away from the materials, to reflect and to think about whether to continue at this time.

1 Welcome to the community

You heard from Matty and Dylan earlier, so let's take a moment to meet the rest of the group from ACT Initiative and Boys Model School project, along with William who has worked with The Open University to put this course together for you.



Figure 3: Group illustration from left to right: Dylan, Matty, Brandon, Adam (top row) and Ashton, Ryan, Stephen, William (bottom row).

Dylan, Matty, Brandon, Adam, Ashton, Ryan, Stephen and William are from the Shankill, a Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist (PUL) community in West/North Belfast. The Shankill has become an international tourist destination because of its history of conflict and is often in the news, like when the riots happened in the Spring of 2021. Many people seem to have views about them, because of where they come from. So, the boys have taken part in making this course to share what they have been learning with William, and to tell their own stories.



Figure 4: Illustration of William

And this is William. William is the Project Director for the ACT Initiative, a conflict transformation programme based on the Shankill Road. As a young man William was drawn into the conflict in Northern Ireland and a result of that is that he spent almost 13 years in the Maze and Long Kesh prison. His personal background is one of the reasons why he does the work he does today with young people.

For these boys growing up in the Shankill, in Northern Ireland, street disturbances, including clashes with the police and young people from other areas, is not something new. You may also have a history of conflict, violence or street disturbances in your areas and amongst your communities too. One aspect of this course is to explore how external forces can shape your thinking and choices particularly in situations of social conflict. Let's start by considering a seemingly simple question to help you understand yourself better.

1.1 Who do you think you are?

Take a moment to think about the question: 'Who am I?'



Figure 5: Who am I?

Let's look at how you might answer this question.

Activity 2: Who am I?

10 minutes

Write down as many different answers to the question 'Who am I?' as quickly as you can in the box below, in whatever order they come to you. Try to write at least 20 different things. There are no right or wrong answers. (Adapted from: Twenty Statements Test by Kuhn and McPartland, 1954)

Table 1: 'Who am I?'

Who am I?	
I am ...	For example: <i>Funny; a good cook; a sister; a brother; loyal; working class; tall ...</i>

Now write down your thoughts in answer to the following questions:

1. How many of the ways you described yourself were things that connected you to other people or groups?
2. How many were things that you value most about yourself personally?
3. Did anything surprise you?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

All of you will have different ideas about who you are. You may have described a community or groups you feel you belong to through your connections with other people such as your family, religion, the place where you live, or your culture. You may also have described some of the things you value about yourself personally. For example, that you are a caring person or funny or interesting or good at football or a thinker. In other words, you can be many different things at the same time.

You may also have found it harder to describe your personal values than your values in relation to other people or your community. If so, take a few minutes to note down some more things in Table 1 that you value about who you are personally now. You will be able to view this table again in Session 3.

This exercise was based on one created by two social researchers, Manford Kuhn and Thomas Partland, many years ago in 1954, to understand how people see themselves. They spotted that people generally describe themselves in two sorts of ways: how they see their role in the world socially and in the groups they belong to (their social identity); and how they see themselves personally. They also discovered that for most people their social identity and the groups or community they feel they belong to can be particularly important. This is especially the case in contexts of social conflict.

1.2 How others see you

It can be hard sometimes to separate who you think you are personally and your values and beliefs from how other people see you and your community, as you will explore next.

Activity 3: Welcome to the Shankill

15 minutes

Now watch Video 2, a short film with Matty and Dylan about their community, the Shankill.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 2: Welcome to the Shankill](#)



Take a few minutes to write your thoughts in the box below:

- How do Matty and Dylan see themselves and their community?
- How does this compare to how others see them and their community?
- Can you list three things that are important to them personally or they want to change?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

From listening to Matty and Dylan, you might have noticed how the recent conflict in and about Northern Ireland (1969-1998) dominates how other people and the media sees them and their community in the Shankill, and why tourists come to their area. While the past is still part of life in the Shankill today, the things they value most are not related to the conflict. Matty for example talks about football and school. Dylan talks about the people of the Shankill and just the normal things in life. In terms of what they want to change, they talk about the need to have their voices heard, the need for more opportunities and things to do for young people such as sports facilities, and they talk about their hopes for their future and for a better future for their community too.

1.3 Not just hoods and thugs

One of the issues Matty talks about is how others see boys like him as just 'hoods and thugs' because of the recent riots but also because of the history of conflict there. The Shankill is one of many areas deeply affected by the conflict that took place in Northern Ireland. This violence lasted for almost thirty years, from 1969 until 1998 when a political agreement (The Good Friday Agreement) was reached between the main parties involved in the conflict. Like many communities, people in the Shankill experienced terrible violence during the conflict. Families were driven out of their homes, people were shot and even killed or lived in fear of this happening every day. Many young people, from across the different communities, were also drawn into the violence during those times, and some including William, spent many years in prison, for their part in this conflict.

For young people today growing up in the Shankill, as in other areas affected by the conflict, the past often overshadows how both they see themselves and how they and their community are seen, by the media and outsiders.

2 What does community mean to you?

Your community is just one aspect of your identity, but it can be an important one. Community can be a simple way of describing things you value that connect you to other people, or where you feel you belong or what you have grown up in, or the place where you live.



Figure 6: Women's hope mural

So, let's start with exploring your local community and what it means to you.

2.1 Community as a place

One way of thinking about your community involves the place where you live and your connections to other people who live there. This could be local neighbourhoods or housing estates and surrounding streets, where people feel bounded by that local area. Matty and Dylan talk about the Shankill as being their community. For example, below is a map of the Shankill. The boundaries of the Shankill area that the boys live in are marked in dark green on this map.



Figure 7: A map of the Shankill area and local community where the boys live

So let's take a look at how would you describe your local community.

Activity 4: Making a profile of your local community

15 minutes

This activity is to help you create a profile of your local community where you live. Thinking about your local area, list at least three points under each heading in the table below. You can do this activity on your own or in a group. This will be saved (as long as you are signed into OpenLearn and enrolled on this course) so you can return to it later in the course for other activities such as mind-mapping.

Table 2: Making a profile of your local community

Places: the important locations, places or spaces, including boundaries that are important to you and maybe to other young people you know.	People: the different groups of people in this location (the key different groups which live in your community for example in terms of faiths, cultures and/or ethnicities).	Issues: the issues that are currently of concern to you and other young people in the area.
Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...
Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...
Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...
Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...
Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...

One way of thinking about community then is as a place, where particular people may feel connected, as well as being affected by particular issues in their area.

2.2 Community as a shared history

Community can be something that exists over generations. Residents who have lived in a neighbourhood for a long period of time may share a sense of belonging, solidarity or

togetherness. They may pass on this sense of belonging to future generations. One useful way of getting to know your local community is to ask someone you know from an older generation to show you pictures or even take you on a local walking tour or to share their stories of the places or people or events that are meaningful to them. You may discover things that are very different to what you know or have been told about your local community today.

The Shankill community, as you have heard, is often defined by its history as one of a number of communities segregated by religious, political or historical differences, and deeply affected by violence in Northern Ireland. This history, visible through the murals and memorials and the 'peacewalls' you saw in the community film, make this one of the top tourists spots in this city. But this is not all that defines this area. There is more to the Shankill than the violence of the conflict here. The Shankill Area Social History Society (S.A.S.H.) for example, documents the stories of its residents going back 70 years or more when this area was famous for its thriving linen mill industry. Local residents also worked in the nearby Harland & Wolff shipyard where the Titanic was built, as well as Mackies – an engineering and rope works factory. They also held street parties and community celebrations, as they do today.

Interactive content is not available in this format.



Figure 8: Slideshow of 5 images from the S.A.S.H. archive

Below is an optional activity you can do in your own time.

Activity 5: Talk to an older relative or neighbour

(optional activity)

Please note, to do this activity, you will need to ask your teacher, community worker, parent or guardian for permission. (But don't worry if you are unable to do this activity, you can skip it.)

Find an older relative or neighbour who lives in your local community to talk to. Your teacher or community worker can help you with this. Make sure your parent or guardian knows this person, and that you are talking to them.

Ask this person what life was like in the area where you live when they were growing up and what the community was like then? For example, what kinds of things did they do with their friends locally and where did they go? What was the area best known for then? What were the issues that mattered to them at your age? How different is this from your own experience of your community? Write your thoughts down in the box below.

- What surprised you most about this conversation?
- How have things changed or stayed the same?
- Did you discover any points of connection with the person you spoke with?
- How has this changed how you think about your local community?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

While it may seem at first that a community is something that is fixed, a community can and does change over time, and is shaped by historical events and experiences. Think about the conversation you have listened to about the Shankill and how older and younger people view their community. You might find some common experiences like knowing the same streets or shops or a shared understanding of the recent past. But their ideas of what this community means might be very different too – especially if their memories go back to life before a period of conflict or violence. This is something you will explore a little more in Section 3.

2.3 Communities of spirit

Another way to think about community is as something that you choose to define or even create for yourself, based on what you value most, as William describes next.

Listen to Video 3, where William talks about what community means to him.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 3: William on community.](#)



Now answer the following questions in Activity 6.

Activity 6: William's perspective on community

15 minutes

- How did you feel reading/listening to William's story of what community means to him?
- Did any of the things he values surprise you?

- Why was having time alone important to him?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

William talks about what community means to him in different ways and has created his own understanding of community and belonging, which is not simply about where he has grown up or how others might see him. For William community is not all about place. Instead, he describes different kinds of communities he belongs to. He uses the phrase 'community of spirit' to describe what he feels with other people such as his family, those he works with on conflict transformation and also with people he spent time with during his long imprisonment. He also values time alone to think and reflect.

Discovering who you are and what you value, as an individual separate from your environment, the community you grow up in or how others see you, is not an easy thing to do. One skill William learned while in prison and through his education and the advice of others, was how to take the time to pause, to reflect on his experience and to actively explore his own thoughts. When doing self-reflection like this it is useful to note down your thoughts so that you can revisit them again at another time. You can also see if your thinking has changed over time. Self-reflection is something you will find valuable to do throughout this course, so why not try it now.

Activity 7: Time to reflect

10 minutes

Take a few minutes to note down your thoughts on the following.

- What do I value most in my life (write down three things)?
- What does community mean to me?
- What community or communities do I feel I belong to? There may be more than one community you feel you belong to so feel free to list as many as you can and how these overlap for you, if at all.

Provide your answer...

Community is something that is made through relationships, memories and experiences with others, and because of this, as people we can also change our community or its boundaries or even make new communities. In times of social or political conflict however, or if you and your community are feeling under threat, it can be harder to change your idea of community or make new connections with others, as you will explore in the next section.

3 Communities and conflict

The city of Belfast has a long history of periodic outbursts of political and communal conflict, extending back over many generations. The recent disturbances on the Shankill, for example, which you saw in the short BBC film, are just one more recent example of this kind of violence. While there are many different views on the causes of the long conflict in Northern Ireland, one of the outcomes is that over the years cities such as Belfast were divided or segregated by religion, political identity or **ethnicity**. During the early days of the conflict in 1969 walls were created at areas where segregated communities met – these became known as interface areas.



Figure 9: 'The Peacewall', Cupar Street, Belfast.

Like many places which have experienced political and communal conflict, Northern Ireland still has a number of these segregated communities today. Some remain separated by walls like the one above (Figure 9) which you also saw in the short film made with Matty and Dylan. This image shows part of the wall that separates the Shankill, a predominantly Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist area, from The Falls, which is a predominantly Catholic/Nationalist/Republican area. Young people from the Shankill have a range of views about the role of the wall here, as you can see in these quotes.

'The peace wall is there to keep people from fighting. Keep them from killing each other, petrol bombing each other's homes.... The other side would say the same'

(Boy 1, from the Shankill, aged 15)

'It's a burden. It's a wall that keeps people separate. We shouldn't have to be separated through a wall'.

(Boy 2, from the Shankill, aged 15)

Activity 8: Community divisions in your area

15 minutes

Note down your thoughts on the following questions about your area.

- Are there any barriers or boundaries between your and other communities in your local area? These don't need to be physical, they could be streets you don't walk down, shops you don't go into for example?
- How does it make you feel when you are in another community's area?
- How do you think people in those communities might feel when they are in your area?
- What might change how you feel?

Provide your answer...

3.1 Living at the interface

Figure 10 is a map of the wall along the interface between the Falls and the Shankill areas in West Belfast. The red line in Figure 10 indicates the peace wall. It runs from the Shankill and Falls to Springfield Road. There are gates or access points between communities along the wall, including one on Lanark Way where the disturbances you saw earlier happened.

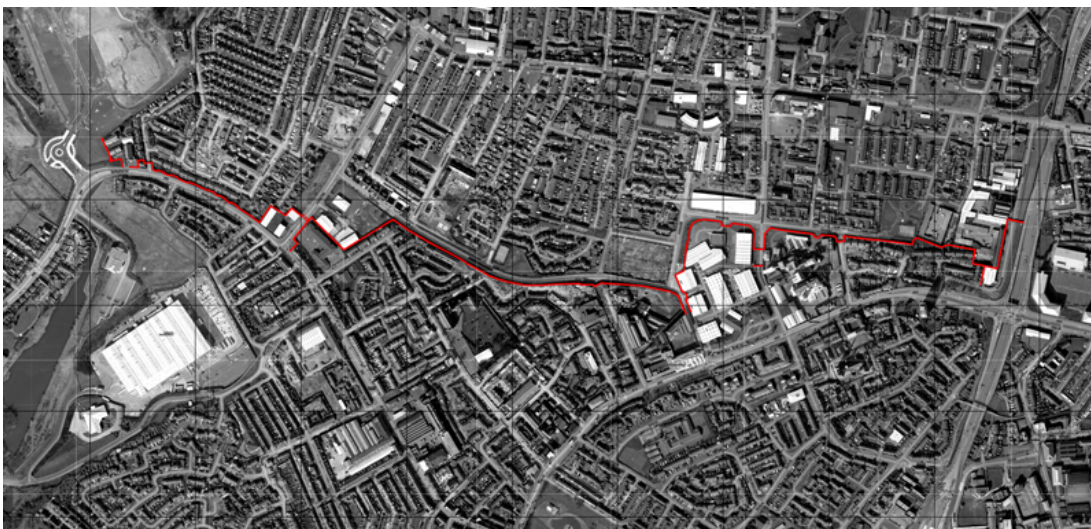


Figure 10: The Falls and the Shankill areas in West Belfast (Source: The Peacewall archive)

Within communities who live on either side of these interfaces, such as the Falls and the Shankill communities, there is often a strong sense of community spirit because of the hardships people have lived through. But there is also fear and mistrust of the other community. It can be hard now to break the cycle when you don't have an opportunity to speak to people on the other side or 'put yourselves in their shoes'.

3.2 Exploring different perspectives

In Belfast and across Northern Ireland, community groups have been working together to gather people's memories and stories from different sides of the conflict mostly from the years before the walls were built, as one way to foster connections today. One of these projects in Belfast is called Dúchas. It was set up by people in the Falls community (who live on the other side of the wall to Matty and Dylan in the Shankill) to record experiences of the conflict. Members of the Shankill community are also working with Dúchas to include some of their stories in this community-led archive.

Activity 9: 'Pieces of the Past'

Part 1: I was born

10 minutes

Listen to these audios (or you can read the transcript) from the oral history project Dúchas, called Pieces of the Past, before answering the questions below. These are just two women's stories which capture life in these communities from the perspective of Beatrice and Rosemary who were born in the late 1940s. Beatrice was born and grew up in the Shankill and Rosemary was born in the Falls and then moved between Ballymurphy [a mainly **CNR** area] and Donegall Pass [a mainly **PUL** area]. In their first stories, Rosemary and Beatrice describe life in these areas in the 1960s, before communities were segregated and the walls were built.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 1: Rosemary: Where I was born

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 2: Beatrice: Where I was born

- Was there anything that surprised you by listening to these women's stories?
- What similarities and differences did you notice between these women's experiences growing up?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You might have noticed how these two women, Beatrice and Rosemary, have different perspectives and identities, but they also have things in common. They were born into working-class communities in the Falls and Shankill and grew up with Catholic and Protestant neighbours. As teenagers in the early 1960s they shared a love of music and dancing including going to the same dance halls – **The Jig** and **The Plaza**. They

comment on how as young people they joined in events with their neighbours such as getting dressed up for **The 12th of July**. But they also describe different experiences, for example with the police.

Part 2: 1969

10 minutes

In their second stories, Beatrice and Rosemary describe the changes that happened in their communities with the outbreak of violence in 1969.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 3: Rosemary: Experiences of 1969

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 4: Beatrice: Experiences of 1969

- What were some of the changes that happened in their lives as the conflict unfolded in 1969?
- Does hearing these two women's stories raise any questions for you?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

From 1969 onwards they both describe seeing their own communities close in, and how neighbours and friends moved or were driven out of their homes, and their areas became more and more segregated. As tensions, violence, fear and mistrust between their communities grew, opportunities to meet and talk to each other also broke down.

It's important to remember these are just two people's personal stories and memories and other people will have different experiences.

Hearing different perspectives can often raise new questions that you may not have thought of and different ways of looking at things. In times of conflict or times of hardship, however, community can become particularly important to a sense of identity and feelings of togetherness as well as a sense of safety in face of danger. People within these communities may choose to stay together for example, because of violence or the fear of violence from others. But over time this can also lead to barriers forming between communities (physical or otherwise), that are hard to break down and this can fuel more violence and mistrust when tensions rise.

This is one explanation given for the recent riots at the interface areas (locations where two different communities meet) in Belfast and other parts of Northern Ireland. This is

something you might have experienced yourself in your communities or amongst groups of young people in your area.

Activity 10: Time to reflect

5 minutes

Take a few minutes to reflect on the following question:

- How might hearing more than one perspective help your understanding of a conflict situation?

Provide your answer...

In situations of conflict community members tend to have a strong sense of their existence in relation to other communities and so their awareness of particular social identities (or group memberships) becomes particularly important or significant. This can lead people to make comparisons with other groups and even feel that there is a sense of competition between groups or communities.

Sometimes it can be helpful to remember that you don't have to be completely defined by your group membership or community, but rather that you have diverse identities, made up from a wide range of group memberships and your personal qualities.

4 Community, your choices and you

Sometimes, your past can shape how you view the present and how others view you. Where you come from, the context in which you grow up, and how other people see you, can affect your options and the choices you make in all sorts of unexpected ways - some positive and some negative.

As you have seen from the boys' film about the Shankill, how people see you and your local community can be used to define you and people's expectations of you. It can also shape how you see yourselves, both positively and negatively. Let's think about how you might describe what community means to you now.

One way to help you explain what community means to you is to draw a 'mind map'. This map could include streets or places, people past and present, relationships with friends, family, places to go, things to do, the past and how it affects you and so on, all around the central idea or topic of community.

Mind-mapping was invented by Tony Buzan (1942–2019), an author who has explored ways in which people think and learn. This is a tool to help you open your mind, think more creatively and come up with new ways of looking at things.

You can also watch this short film on doing a mind map.

Video content is not available in this format.

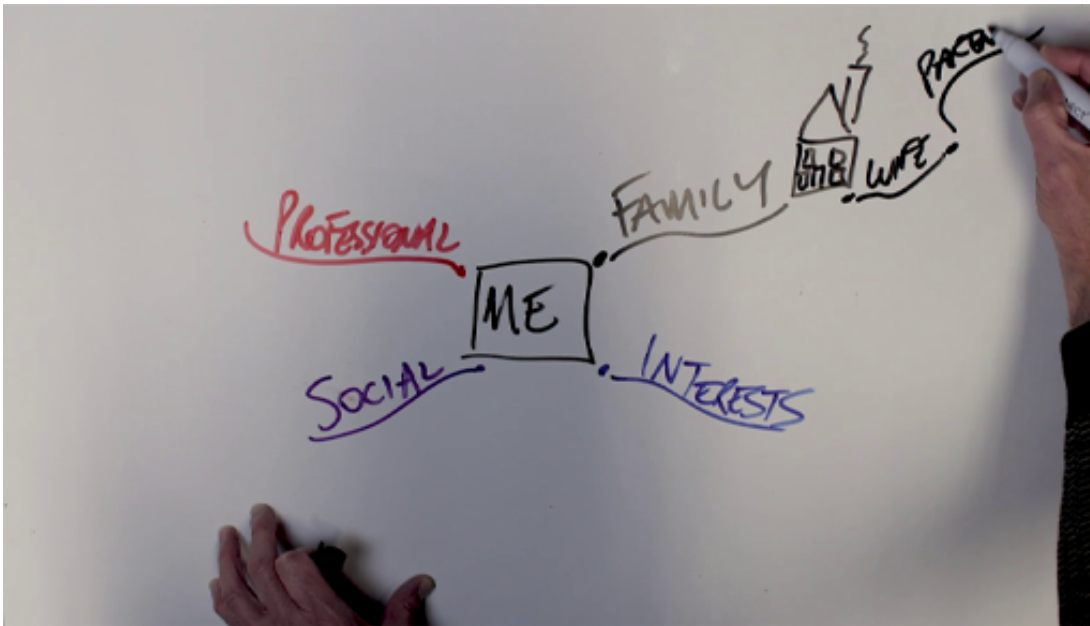
[Video 4: William's explanation of a mind map](#)



Mind maps are often very personal – they are, after all, maps of **your** mind. For example, take a look at this short video of William doing his mind map of 'me'.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 5: William's community mind map \(please note, this video has no audio\)](#)



Activity 11: Mapping your community

15 minutes

Now take a blank piece of paper to create a mind map of what community means to you. When you have finished take a picture of it to keep. If you prefer to do a word-based map without colour or pictures, you can use this online mapping tool. Don't forget to save your map.

Interactive content is not available in this format.



Interactive 1: Mind-mapping

Discussion

Everyone's community mind map will be different. As an example, your understanding of community might have multiple meanings and be both negative – violence, segregation, local alienation as well as peace and global connections and belonging.

Community, or the sense of belonging you feel with others, can be about where you live, or from having a shared history in a place. It can be about something you cannot see or directly experience yet it is there nevertheless, such as a shared social identity or culture or shared values and can exist over time and across generations. It can also be about how other people see you and other people's expectations of you based on this.

By mapping what community means to you, you can understand how these different ideas of community might shape your action and choices. By stepping back and reflecting on what community means to you, you can also begin to create your own understanding of community and change the role you play. In Session 2, you will explore some of the

reasons why you make the choices you do, develop your skills for thinking critically and develop skills to help you make the right decisions for you.

Activity 12: Time to reflect

10 minutes

Before you finish this session, take a moment to reflect again on the question 'Who am I?' which was posed in Section 2. What have you learned about yourself and your place within your community or communities?

Provide your answer...

5 Summary

In this session you have:

- explored why some young people feel rioting is the only way to have their voice heard
- considered what you value most and the issues of concern to you in your community
- considered how other people's views of you and your community or its past, can shape how you see yourself and the options you have for highlighting the issues you care about
- developed your self-reflection skills
- developed your mind-mapping skills to explore your thoughts and to think more creatively.



Figure 11: Group illustration from left to right: Dylan, Matty, Brandon, Adam (top row) and Ashton, Ryan, Stephen, William (bottom row). William (Project Director for the ACT Initiative) is on the right of the group.

We hope you liked Session 1 of the course and that it was helpful to you. Session 2 explores choices and decisions, with lots of tips and advice. See you there.

Protecting your mental health and wellbeing

Please refer to the [Sources of support](#) page if you notice a negative emotional reaction to aspects of the course materials. You may wish to step away from the materials, to reflect and to think about whether to continue at this time.

Now go to [Session 2](#).

Session 2: Choices

Introduction

'A thing I have learned is to stop and think for a moment first before (acting). I would stand and think first for a second...what's the point?'

(Dylan, aged 15)

Welcome to Session 2 of the course *Why riot? Community, choices, aspirations*. In this session you will explore different factors that might influence the choices you feel you have as young people and the decisions you make, and you will develop your critical thinking skills to help you question information and make up your own mind about the issues that concern you.



Figure 1: Padlock at the Lanark way interface, Belfast. (Source: © Hugh Pollock, 2021)

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- understand what might influence your choices
- question online information and fact check
- use social media in positive ways.



Figure 2: Group illustration from left to right: Dylan, Matty, Brandon, Adam (top row) and Ashton, Ryan, Stephen, William (bottom row). William (Project Director for the ACT Initiative) is on the right of the group.

We hope you enjoy Session 2 of our course.

1 Why do you make the choices you make?

People make choices every day. But how much do you think about those choices you are making? What processes (if any) do you go through when you make decisions? And what are some of the factors that might influence these choices?



Figure 3: Why do you make the choices you make?

Let's go back to the riots that took place across Belfast and other cities in Northern Ireland in the spring of 2021. The riots began in largely Protestant Unionist Loyalist (PUL) areas during a time of political tension. Street violence and clashes took place between PUL youth and the local police force (PSNI) and then at interface areas, between young people from PUL and Catholic/Nationalist/Republican (CNR) communities. A number of people were arrested after these events including teenage boys.

Read these quotes from young people involved in this course, about why young people riot. One quote is from a boy who was involved in the riots and later arrested. The other is from Dylan which you also read in Session 1.

'There's loads of kids, like loads of young teens, like myself, they like— they just want to go out to have fun. Like a riot to them is fun. Like they like fun stuff. I think they got a buzz out of it. Like, see other people, they actually have a point of view of what's going on. Where most people don't. They just want to go out and have fun.'

(Young person aged 15)

'Most people just rely on going out of the house and looking for a riot and going and throwing a few bricks and then the trouble starts and then think that's how to get their voice heard until they are sitting in the back of a wagon [police van] and going down to Musgrave [a city centre police station] and having to ask a few questions. Why were they there? And why were they doing it? Why were they doing it is the question?'

(Dylan aged 15)

Activity 1: What influences people's choices?

10 minutes

- What do you think when you read these quotes?
- Do you recognise any of these feelings?
- How much do you think the people in the quotes thought before they acted? Is that true for you too?

Provide your answer...

1.1 Community, identity, belonging

In the first session you explored how important the idea of community is to your sense of who you are, how you see yourself and also to how other people see you. You read and heard from the contributors about the values they have in relation to community and what it is they hold dear. Some of these demonstrate that there are similarities in how people value community but, equally so, some differences. You have also been introduced to the Shankill community, a predominantly Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist (**PUL**) community in Belfast, which like a lot of communities in Northern Ireland (and also possibly the ones in which you live) is emerging from conflict. And you considered how a history of conflict or violence or division in a community can also affect how outsiders see people from that community. Some of the comments from the young people are still rooted in the history associated with their community and how this may have influenced some of the choices they have made thus far in their lives.

In Session 1 you also developed some new skills to help you think creatively about who you are, what community means to you and how you can find your own sense of identity within this. You might want to take look again at your answers to the question '[Who am I?](#)' and your [mind map](#) on what community means to you from Session 1.

Having a clear sense of your own identity and values – as opposed to what other people think about you – is the first tool to help you make decisions and choices that are right for you.

1.2 How free are you to choose?

By the age of 15 or 16 you, like many young people, may be starting to make important decisions or choices about your future (sometimes with advice or guidance from parents or guardians) such as, 'What do I want to do in life' or 'Should I stay in education (at school or college)?' Imagine this is the decision you are about to make now. Do you know what factors might influence your decision?



Figure 4: How free are you to choose?

Activity 2: Should I stay in education ?

15 minutes

Take a look at these two young people Alex and Jo (characters) and the choices they face.

Character A: This is Alex. Alex is 15 and thinking about whether to stay on and study after the age of 16. Some of Alex's teachers think Alex has academic potential [to go on to college or university] but no one in the family has stayed on in education. Most of Alex's friends are also not interested in staying on in school. Some are already getting jobs or apprenticeships. Earning money right now would be really helpful to the family as times are tough, but Alex also really likes school and subjects like reading, maths, and drawing, and dreams of being an engineer or designing things. Alex sometimes has self-doubts too about having what it takes to study.

Character B: This is Jo. Jo is 15 and thinking about whether to stay on and study after the age of 16. Jo's brother is going to university. Jo's mother is a doctor and everyone in their family expects Jo to become a doctor too. Many of Jo's friends are planning to stay on in school and go to University, though some are also talking about getting jobs. Jo's not sure about a career in medicine and often dreams of a more practical job like being a plumber and where you can be your own boss.

For both Alex and Jo, choose one option below to summarise how you see their choice.

- a. To leave school and find a job that will support them and their family.
- b. To follow their dreams and stay on in school.
- c. To take another path. Can you give an example?

What made you choose a, b or c for Alex or Jo? Is there something in your own background or experience that led you to that option?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

When making an important decision there are often a range of issues that inform your choices. Some of these you may be able to see very clearly. Others you may not even be aware of until they are in front of you – but can influence the choices you make. For example, you may be concerned about how others see you or you may not know how to achieve your dreams if no one you know has chosen this path to show you the way. Maybe it just feels like you have no choice at all, or that other people have already made decisions about you and for you, based on your background or the community you live in.

1.3 Breaking the mould

As you have seen, there are many different things that can restrict the choices you have (the options that are available to you) and influence your decisions – what you choose to do. Some are easy to identify. But many are harder to see. People are influenced by what they know and the surroundings social systems and structures they grow up in. For example, the values of the political system you grow up in, whether you live in a wealthy area or an area of high deprivation, an urban or rural area, whether you live in a mixed/diverse/international community or one rooted in its local history. The society we are born into has its own history, tradition and culture as well as economic, political and social factors which shape how we grow up. In turn, these factors can condition or constrain or limit us in what we believe and how we think.

Activity 3: William's story: Part 1

15 minutes

Now watch this short video in which William who you met earlier, tells his story of how he became involved in the conflict in Northern Ireland as a 15-year-old boy and the decisions he made at that time.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 1: William's story: Part 1](#)



- What questions does his story raise for you?
- What kinds of social issues might have limited William's choices?
- From hearing his story as a 15-year-old boy what do you imagine his future might have held?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

In your own lives, there are some things you can't easily change or that are outside of your control, whether personally or in the society in which you live. But there are things that you do have some control over right now, such as how you use your own mind to think about things and how you use this thinking to inform the decisions you make. This can also change how others see you and can help you make a positive contribution the world.

The South American educationalist Paulo Freire (1921–1997) described how people's freedom to be more than what they already know, is conditioned by their social context – or the reality in which they live. But that wasn't the end of the story for Freire. He was also interested in how change happens. Freire developed a radical approach to education with communities, empowering people to use learning and knowledge to expand their understandings of themselves, their social structures and how to change things.

This use of knowledge is something that William has done in his life. In the next video, William is reflecting on his choices and decisions, while in prison and after he returns to his community from prison. His story begins in the **compounds** of the **Maze and Long Kesh prison** in Northern Ireland, where William was imprisoned for 13 years. From here he talks about the choices he made after this release from prison following the paramilitary ceasefires in 1994 and following the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

Activity 4: William's story: Part 2

15 minutes

Watch the video and then consider the questions that follow.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 2: William's story: Part 2](#)



- Is there anything that surprised you about William's story?
- Can you give some examples of the decisions he made as an adult, after returning to the community?
- What are some of the changes William describes in his ways of thinking about the world?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You may be surprised that William chose such a different pathway than the one he pursued as a teenager. In his reflections, William gives different examples of decisions he made as an adult, based on his personal values, that contrast with those he made as a young man. He describes choosing to live in a mixed community and to educate his children in an integrated school [cross community]. He chose to return to education and to work with young people to support them in making different choices. William mentions becoming a more articulate and self-aware person and when talking about his children, and the young people with whom he works, the importance of seeing beyond the world in which you are living or growing up.

William's story hints at the possibility within all of us to learn to think differently and to use these skills to open alternative options or pathways. As you have seen, when making decisions, people often stick with what they know or is familiar to them. For example, when thinking about work or their future career, people may follow the same pathways as their parents or friends. You too may want to follow what you know already in life, but you can also explore different pathways. To do this you need to 'use your head' or thinking skills.

Let's look at some tools to help you to develop your thinking so that choices you make are your own and not just following the crowd.

2 Thinking for yourself

In today's digital world you have the potential to connect to other people, places, information and ideas that take you far beyond where you are born or are growing up. You also have access to a wealth of information. But it is not enough just to have knowledge about something or to know stuff. You need to know how to think through all this information in order to make your own decisions and choices.



Figure 5: Image of a mural

The thinker Edward De Bono (1933–2021) claims most forms of education concentrate on knowledge. The educationalist Paulo Freire (1921–1997), who you met earlier, states that education often focusses on delivering existing knowledge rather than encouraging ways of thinking and questioning. This combination can lead to people simply following the same pathways of thought as those around them. What both De Bono and Freire are arguing for is a more conscious process of thinking, in which people think about the different influences they are under, explore different possibilities and make your own decisions and choices.

2.1 Social media influence and the riots

Earlier you were introduced to the riots that took place in PUL areas in Belfast and other cities in Northern Ireland in the Spring of 2021. These riots and street disturbances also

spread to interface or boundary areas between Catholic/Nationalist/Republican (CNR) and Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist (PUL) communities, where tensions were already high. In the aftermath of the riots, commentators, community workers, and young people themselves describe social media as playing a significant role. So what information sources were young people relying on when making decisions about whether to join the disturbances and how might this have influenced their choices?

Take a moment to read some of the comments below on social media in the build-up to the Belfast riots in 2021, targeting young people in areas like the Shankill.



Figure 6: Speech bubbles

And here are some reflections from the young people involved in this course on what was happening on social media.



Figure 7: Group illustration from left to right: Dylan, Matty, Brandon, Adam (top row) and Ashton, Ryan, Stephen, William (bottom row). William (Project Director for the ACT Initiative) is on the right of the group.

'People were making all sorts of fake accounts just to get people out. Grown men saying like "Oh we want everyone around here at such a time." As soon as it happens, everyone just goes out [on the streets]'.

'the kids are hearing stuff that's 99% through social media, which isn't always accurate. And they are led to believe different stories, which doesn't really represent what this community is about'.

Shankill Community worker

Activity 5: Responding to a call to action

15 minutes

How would you decide what to do if faced with a call to action on social media around an issue facing you or your community?

Provide your answer...

Sometimes in the heat of the moment it can be hard to see clearly what is happening, especially if you are feeling angry or upset. And as the boys also highlighted, sometimes things are not always what they seem. It may be that other people have their own agenda and reasons for wanting you to act in a certain way or to influence your actions.

Thinking critically is a powerful tool you can use to help you question information, weigh up and evaluate the quality of any information and make your own decisions based on this. Let's start with ways of questioning the information you receive.

2.2 Filter bubbles and echo chambers

People use information every day to make decisions. One of the main sources of information is likely to be social media. Yet, have you ever noticed how the information and social media messages you see online are often personalised to you, from adverts about the brand of trainers you like, to the sports clubs you support, to the political views you or your friends tend to know or already agree with? This is called a filter bubble or an echo chamber (where the same views as your own are echoed back to you).

Filter bubbles narrow the range of information you have access to, which has its benefits if you always buy a particular brand of jeans or trainers, but is not so helpful when trying to understand important issues or if you need to make informed decisions. You may also find it harder to identify false information as you are not exposed to other sources of information or ideas that may challenge you or make you question what you are reading or hearing.

Activity 6: Understanding filter bubbles

20 minutes

Take a few minutes to watch Video 3 before answering the following questions.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 3: Filter bubbles and fake news](#)

WHAT ARE FILTER BUBBLES, WHAT DO THEY HAVE TO DO WITH FAKE NEWS?

1. You are in a filter bubble when:

- Computer algorithms use your online search history and preferences to make assumptions about what you want to hear and filters the information it feeds you.
- Computer algorithms use your online search history and preferences to expand the range of ideas and perspectives it feeds you.

2. Which of the following can happen when you are in a filter bubble?

- ☐ It isn't always obvious you are in a filter bubble!
- ☐ You may only see the opinions of those who think the same way as you.
- ☐ You may be surprised by or become much less tolerant of other viewpoints.

3. Fake news is _____ that is purposefully circulated.

Provide your answer...

Answer

misinformation

4. List three reasons for why people might circulate fake news.

Provide your answer...

Answer

- For money (for example fake reviews may influence you into buying a product).
- For propaganda (information may be designed to influence you politically).
- For fun (false stories can become viral videos for sharing and entertainment).

5. Why do you think misinformation or fake news does well in filter bubbles?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

In your reflections you might thought about how only reading the views of those who agree with you means you have nothing to compare or check this information against. You may not be exposed to different views which raise question or alarm bells. Something might sound very believable because it uses the same language you do. Or you may think that it must be true because no one else in your circles has stopped to check the information or flagged it as an issue.



Figure 8: Fact or fake?

So, how can you protect yourself from filter bubbles and false or misinformation? In short, you can't. If you use the internet and social media, computer algorithms will analyse what you say and do online and filter the information you see. This can be helpful for some tasks, but it will also limit what you see and hear. The important thing is for you to be aware that you might be isolated from wider society in your thinking (in a filter bubble), so ask questions about the information you receive and expand the range of information you are exposed to.

3 How to spot false or fake news

Fake news like other forms of disinformation and misinformation is nothing new. It has been used throughout history – you may have studied the use of propaganda in the Second World War (1939–1945) or the Cold War (from the 1950s to 1989) for example. More recently in the war in Ukraine, both mainstream media and social media have become battlegrounds in which propaganda and misinformation are widely used. In the world of social media, misinformation is just more personally targeted whether for fun, to influence you for political reasons or just to make money. This matters because the information you are exposed to often shapes how you see the world, and your understanding of society. It can also influence how you feel and the decisions you make. This is particularly the case in times of high emotion, political tension or conflict. Remember for example, some of the comments by young people and community workers in the Shankill about the false information and fake messages they were targeted with.

3.1 Information, misinformation, disinformation

There are many kinds of false information some of which are outlined below. Click the following labels in Interactive Figure 9 to reveal the answer. When clicking on the top hexagonal shapes, you may need to scroll down slightly to see the information box (that appears below the image) on your screen.

Interactive content is not available in this format.



Figure 9 (interactive): Different types of false information

While you can't avoid false information, you can read more widely, talk to people outside your circles and read mainstream reputable news sources, to burst your filter bubbles. At the end of this session, you will find lots of resources to explore and quizzes you can try on how to recognise deep fakes, misinformation and propaganda.

You can also use your thinking and questioning skills to help you evaluate the quality of the information and to make good decisions for you. Let's look at some tips and tricks for doing this.

3.2 Separating opinions from facts

How do you know what information is a fact or just someone's opinion, or even who is behind the information being posted, or messages that are targeting you and your friends? There are many ways that you can fact check information and claims.



Figure 10: Tweet from former US president Donald Trump, 26 May 2020

This tweet was posted by former US president Donald Trump on 26 May 2020 and flagged as requiring fact checking by Twitter.

There are lots of polarising issues that become the focus of offline and online debate, conspiracy theories and misinformation campaigns, from highly contested elections to Brexit, climate change and Covid. These are issues that you may be discussing amongst your friends and making decisions about personally or within your community, or that your politicians are making decisions about through national and international policies.

Let's take the example of this tweet from Donald Trump. There are a few simple ways to check information online and on social media. Think: before you act take a moment to stop and think, is this information correct/real? You can use online searches to look for information around the issue and check facts using websites like [Fullfact.org](https://fullfact.org).

Take a look at Figure 11 and ask yourself 5 simple questions: who, what, where, when and why.

Interactive content is not available in this format.



Figure 11 (interactive): TIPS: The Trustworthy information check list

Now have a go at Activity 7.

Activity 7: Fact-checking Trump

20 minutes

Try your skills with former President Donald Trump's tweet from 26 May 2020.

You can do this on your own or with friends. Take a few minutes to do some online research around the story. Think about the 5 questions as you do to help with your research. Fill in the table below. At the end of this process ask yourself what is your judgement on this tweet? Was it opinion or fact? Is it something people should believe and react to? If you were a Trump supporter how would it have made you feel?

Table 1: Fact-checking Trump

There is NO WAY (ZERO!) that Mail-In Ballots will be anything less than substantially fraudulent. Mail boxes will be robbed, ballots will be forged & even illegally printed out & fraudulently signed. The Governor of California is sending Ballots to millions of people, anyone...— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump)

Who - Source	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
What – The facts	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Where	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
When	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Why / how does it make you feel.	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

Discussion

Table 1: Fact-checking Trump (Discussion)

There is NO WAY (ZERO!) that Mail-In Ballots will be anything less than substantially fraudulent. Mail boxes will be robbed, ballots will be forged & even illegally printed out & fraudulently signed. The Governor of California is sending Ballots to millions of people, anyone...— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump)

Who - Source	This comes from Donald Trump's personal account.
What – The facts	While Trump makes claims about voter fraud, there is no factual evidence in this statement to back it up. For example no links to external or independent and verifiable sources that confirm what he is saying. The claim that the Governor of California is sending ballots to millions of people has no context. Such as whether this is normal practice i.e people can choose to register for postal votes.
Where	This was posted on Twitter. At the time this message had over 130 thousands likes and 38,000 retweets.
When	It was posted on the 26 May 2020. There was a presidential election taking place in the US in 2020. Trump was standing for the Republican party and Biden for the Democratic party. A search of news reports highlighted that more potential democratic voters were registering to vote using postal votes than republican.
Why / how does it make you feel.	The language is quite emotive. He used words like fraudulent, robbed, illegally signed ...

Remember, how information makes you feel can be one of the most important factors in any decision you make, but if you use your head and not your heart, you will be in control of the decisions you make and not just following the herd. Why not try using these skills to fact checking stories you have come across on social media in your own life.

4 How to handle hate speech

It can be hard to keep a clear head and make cool decisions when there is so much messaging going on, including offensive language and hate speech on social media whether it's on chat groups or by sharing videos.

Activity 8: Time to reflect

5 minutes

Reflect on the following questions.

Have you ever said something on social media without thinking? Or when you are angry to hurt someone else? What difference did this make to the situation?

Provide your answer...

Social media is both a source of information and a powerful tool to talk with friends, share ideas, organise events and mobilise others locally or globally, to work together on common issues you care about. It is also a place where people can create false information to manipulate others, use hateful language and be abusive to those they don't agree. It can sometimes feel like anything can go online, which can make it a dangerous and sometimes very hurtful space. But this is your space too, and you have choices in how you use social media, how you connect with others and how you make change happen.

This is what young people did in Parkland, Florida in 2018, in response to a terrible event that affected them and their communities.

4.1 'March for our lives'

In February 2018, 17 students were shot and killed by a fellow student armed with an assault rifle at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, Parkland (US). This was the latest in a spate of school shootings in America, where gun ownership is legal, and the right to gun ownership is a highly emotive and divisive issue. While the world's media covered the events as a news story, students at the school began to tell their own stories on social media, sharing their feelings, challenging the views of politicians and commentators, and calling for stricter gun controls. Within days some of these students including Emma Gonzalez and Cameron Kinsky used social media to build a campaign called *March for Our lives* around the issue of gun control. Hundreds and thousands of young people soon joined them, taking to the streets in marches across America as part of a youth led social movement to hold their politicians to account and to demand change.



Figure 12: Emma Gonzalez (centre right) at a March for Our Lives protest, 2018

On 24 March, one of the *March for Our Lives* founders, 17-year-old Emma Gonzalez made a speech to her political leaders – here are two quotes.

‘Maybe the adults have gotten used to saying ‘it is what it is’, but if us students have learned anything, it’s that if you don’t study, you will fail. And in this case if you actively do nothing, people continually end up dead, so it’s time to start doing something.’

‘The people involved right now, those who were there, those posting, those tweeting, those doing interviews and talking to people, are being listened to for what feels like the very first time on this topic.’

Activity 9: Time to reflect

5 minutes

What do Emma’s statements make you feel about your power as a young person?

Provide your answer...

Over the following months these young people spoke to politicians, ran national anti-violence rallies, became spokespeople for their generation and shifted the debate around gun control in their country. They also learned a lot about how social media could be a negative or positive force. As they took to social media promoting debate and discussion around the issues they cared about, these young people also became the target for hate speech, trolling and misinformation. Those who opposed their views spread negative stories, produced fake profiles and fake images. **Twitter** provided online verification – a tick symbol – for Emma Gonzalez, Cameron Kasky and the other prominent students activist so people would be able to tell when they were hearing directly from these young people.

Gary Janela 
@gary_janela

Figure 13: Example of the twitter blue tick symbol

Activity 10: Verification and you

15 minutes

- Can you think of any examples where you or young people in your community have been misrepresented on social media?
- What ideas do you have for how to counter this kind of misinformation?

Provide your answer...

Find out more about the March for our Lives campaign [here](#).

4.2 Changing the conversation

‘Social media especially. It’s the worse for it. It’s just slabbering [being provocative or insulting].’

(Boy 1, the Shankill)

‘You get people that put up videos of the riots and all. Say one side would be like aye with tricolours [Irish flag]. And then the other side would be Union Jacks [British Flag]. People like put up videos people of throwing bricks and putting in car windows and all that stuff.’

(Boy 2, the Shankill)

Social media can be a hateful space. This is something the boys in the Shankill talked about a lot. Offensive language can also be really hurtful to experience, and it can be tempting to use this language yourself whether to goad someone you are angry with or in

retaliation when there are issues you feel strongly about. So how can you change the conversation?

Activity 11: Using your head on social media

20 minutes

Watch Video 4, with another one of the *March for our lives* founders Cameron Kansky reflecting on what he has learned in 2021. Take notes as you listen to what he is saying.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 4: Cameron Kansky's reflection on the *March for our lives*



- What struck you most from listening to Cameron?
- Write down three key lessons Cameron learned?
- Are there any situations you can think of in your lives where you can apply his advice?

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)

Discussion

Cameron had lots of useful advice from his experience. Different things he said may have been meaningful to each of you depending on your own situation. Some examples are outlined in the top tips at the end of this section.

Cameron describes both his experience of being the target for hate speech and also some of the consequences of using negative, hateful or derogatory talk whether online or in person. As you heard in Cameron's film, making other people feel bad is not just disrespectful. It can also be a barrier to solving problems, especially around contested issues where people strongly disagree. If instead you try to see and connect with

others as human beings, are open to others' points of views and to learning from others, you may be able to build create a space for people to talk and for real change to happen.

Cameron's tips for talking to people you disagree with

- Social media exists to supplement but not replace human connection.
- Don't become part of the problem. (Try instead to be part of the solution.)
- Break down the walls – it's important to look at people we disagree with as other human beings. Approach everybody like they are part of the same world you are.
- Come from the place you want to learn.
- You learn the most from people who disagree with you.
- Aim to lift someone up, not knock them down. Disagree with the issue not the person.
- Be open to changing your mind.

4.3 How does it make you feel?

'Just use your head, don't be rash about it, think it through'.

(Matty, 15)

Questioning and evaluating are powerful skills. You can use these skills to check how trustworthy the information you hear or see is, and to reveal some of the hidden influences that you are exposed to everyday. You can also use these skills to help you change how you relate to others on social media.

Tips: Stop, check, think before you act

Before you act, stop and ask yourself some simple questions:

- Have you checked the information is correct?
- Think – How does this information make you feel?
 - Are you acting with your heart, or with your head?
 - What are the consequences of taking this action for others and for you?
 - Will your actions help to solve the problem at stake?

These tips are adapted from the [Fact NI toolkit](#).

Activity 12: What would you do?

5 minutes

If you got a message like one of these anonymously, what would you do? And which one do you think gives you the most choices? Choose one of the following responses.

- You hear on social media that the police have just arrested a young lad you know. He's being held in the local police station and he's in a bad way. What do you do?
 - You hear that young people in a neighbouring community have got funding for their youth centre and your community has got nothing. You are angry and frustrated. What do you do?
 - Someone has been offensive to you on social media and is saying hateful things about you and your community. What do you do?
- Respond straight away, for example by taking to the streets with your mates; or by sending angry or hateful messages.
 - Stop, check, and think before you act.
 - Share the message with all your networks so everyone knows the news and what's happening on the streets.

In the next session you will explore ways to come up with alternative possibilities, to help you decide what to do in the situations you face.

Activity 13: Time to reflect

10 minutes

Before you finish this session, think again about how you make decisions in difficult situations. What have you learned and what would do differently now that you developed these new skills?

Provide your answer...

5 Summary

You have listened to William and choices he made, and you have heard how social media affected riots. You have learned to question information and disinformation in your own lives, and how filter bubbles can reduce the range of views and opinions you are exposed to or can manipulate how you feel and act. You have learned how to use your head for example to stop, check (verify the information) and think (analyse the information, why it is saying what it is saying and how it makes you feel) before you act on it.

Finally, you have listened to the stories of young people in Parkland Florida and their experiences of using social media, and learned some valuable tips on how to talk constructively on social media and face to face, even with people you don't agree with.

In Session 3 you will be doing this and looking at ways to use your skills for positive change and to help you make your own decisions for your future.

Protecting your mental health and wellbeing

Please refer to the [Sources of support](#) page if you notice a negative emotional reaction to aspects of the course materials. You may wish to step away from the materials, to reflect and to think about whether to continue at this time.

We hope you enjoyed this session. See you in [Session 3](#).

Session 3: Aspirations

Introduction

‘My qualities? Leadership, honesty and respect. I don’t want to be looked upon as a young hood or young thug, because I’m not’.

(William, aged 15)

Welcome to Session 3 in the course *Why riot? Community, choices, aspirations*. This session focuses on making your future, the future you want it to be. It is about opening new possibilities and choices, finding your voice, and making your own decisions to help you achieve your goals.



Figure 1: Mural in the Shankill, Belfast, 2021

By the end of this Session 3, you should be able to:

- think creatively about problems and how to solve them
- use your mind to open new possibilities and choices
- make decisions based on your values
- find your own voice
- explore ways of working with others on shared goals.



Figure 2: Group illustration from left to right: Dylan, Matty, Brandon, Adam (top row) and Ashton, Ryan, Stephen, William (bottom row). William (Project Director for the ACT Initiative) is on the right of the group.

We hope you enjoy this session, which is the final session in our course.

1 The future and you

In previous sessions you listened to the boys talk about the Shankill community they love, and why they thought young people had rioted. You also heard them question if rioting was the best way to get their voice heard. In the aftermath of the riots nothing had changed politically. Some young people had been arrested. Many young people – especially boys – including those not involved in the riots, also found the community looked upon them negatively as troublemakers or young ‘hoods’.

When the boys making this course first met William after the riots, he asked them a number of questions. For example, what did they think was the end game [goal] for young people who took part in the riots and violence; what did they as young people want to say as they all said they wanted a voice; and what were their hopes from taking part in the course with William? In between the banter, the boys had lots of opinions and hopes too for changing how others saw them.

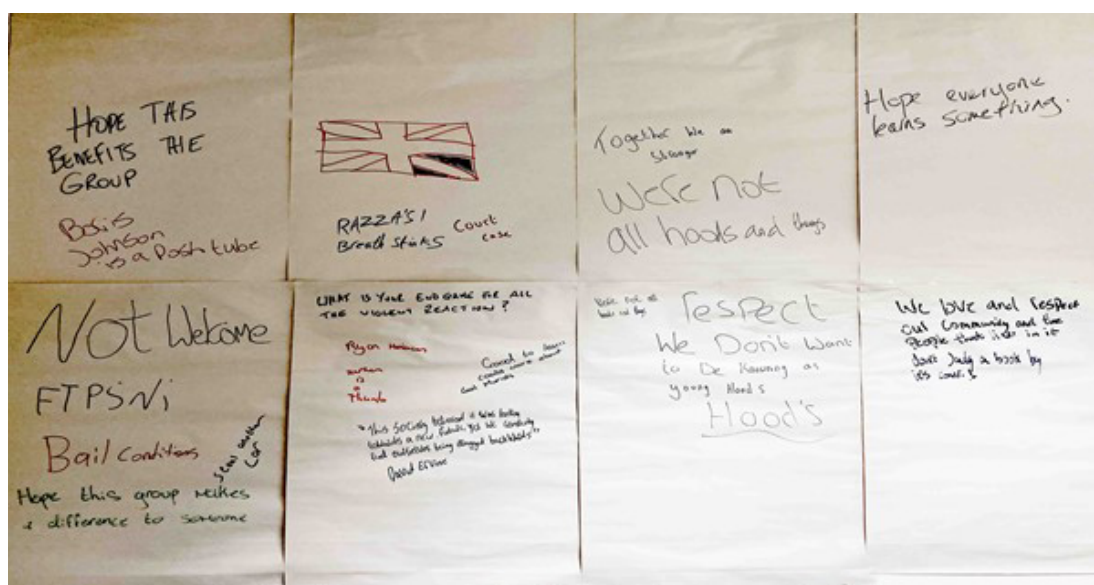


Figure 3: 'What is the end game?' William and the boys' wordstorming whiteboard, May 2021.

The boys were particularly concerned with how they were seen now in their community. But they were not sure how they could change things. To help them with this William asked them what they wanted for themselves and how they saw themselves in their future. Now let's join the boys as they revisit these questions and explore their aspirations (what they hope for).

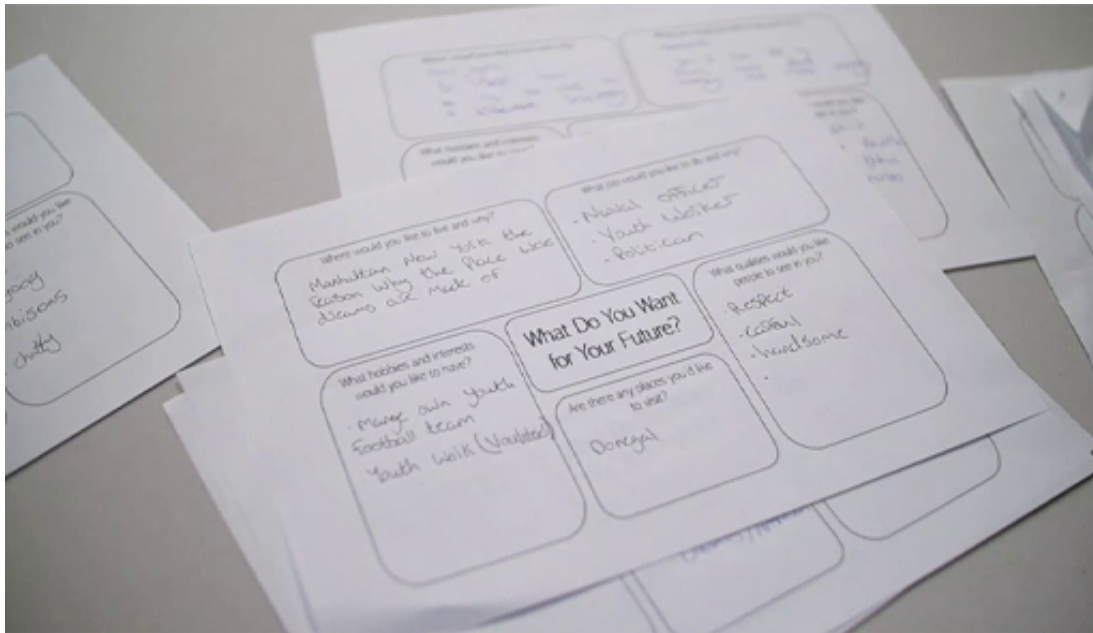
Activity 1: Hopes for the future

10 minutes

Watch Video 1 and then try this activity for yourself.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 1: Boys' Aspirations Workshop](#)



Write down what you want for your future in the boxes below. Let your imagination run free. Think of these as goals or aspirations for your life, that you can work towards. You will be able to save this document to look at or work on again later.

Table 1: What do you want for your future?

Where would you like to live and why?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
What job would you like to do and why?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
What are your hobbies and interests?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Are there any places you'd like to visit?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
What qualities would you like people to see in you?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

Source: Beth Sandhem

Discussion

Depending on how you are feeling and how much thinking you have done so far, this might have been an easy or difficult task. Don't worry if you struggled to imagine your future. This is something you will be able to revisit at the end of this session as you develop your creative thinking skills and use your imagination to think about different possibilities and futures.

What you want for your future will be personal to you. In this activity you might have said you wanted to continue to live in your local area and bring change to your community. Or you might want to live in another city or country, or travel the world. You might want to go to university or be a street artist or run your own food business. You might want people to see you as someone who is independent minded or kind or trustworthy or courageous. Or

you might have struggled to think of things that took you beyond what you already know or see around you or what others expect of you.

It is often easy to identify what you don't want, but harder to know what you do want or to imagine something different and how to achieve this. This is where you can use your skills of reflection, critical thinking, and your imagination too, to deepen your understanding of your situation and to create different choices. Let's look at how you can come up with alternative possibilities, to help you decide what to do in the situations you face.

1.1 Exploring possibilities

One way of thinking outside the box when faced with a choice or a problem is to imagine you are trying to solve a puzzle. A detective, for example, will explore all the different possibilities or explanations and then weigh the best option or most likely explanation, using information as evidence.



Figure 4: Light bulb moment

Inventors do a similar thing when coming up with solutions. The American inventor and businessman Thomas Edison (1847–1931) tested more than 6,000 different materials in his search for the filament for the light bulb, before arriving at bamboo as the one that worked most effectively. This teaching on thinking has been adapted from some of the thinking techniques developed by Edward De Bono (1933–2021) who you met in Session 2.

Now imagine you were a detective trying to solve the following puzzle...

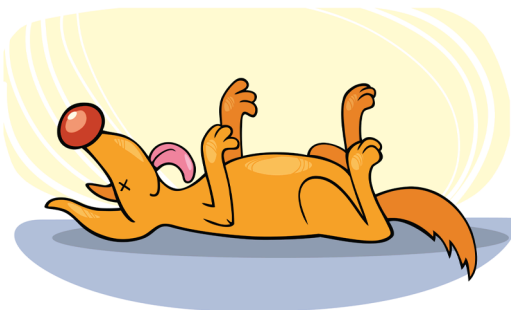


Figure 5: Exploring possibilities

Take a look at this picture of a dog lying dead. What happened?

There are several possible explanations that can be explored, examined and discounted or not, depending on the facts. For example:

- The dog accidentally fell from the flats above.

- Someone from a rival gang killed the dog for revenge.
- The dog ate rat poison nearby.
- The dog was found dead somewhere else and put here.
- The dog was just old, laid down here and died.

Often in situations where there seems at first to be an obvious explanation, there are many other possibilities that are worth considering, weighing up and deciding if they are valid before closing the case. When faced with a puzzle or problem and it feels like there is only one choice, remember to take a step back and look at it with a cool head. If you look hard enough, you might find there are more choices available than you first thought. Your ability to imagine different possibilities can help you with understanding a situation and different people's agendas or motivations and help you come up with different responses or solutions.

1.2 Considering the consequences

Most things that you do will affect other people, so it is important to think about what the reaction of others might be before you act, especially if you are hoping to achieve something with your actions. You always need to consider whether the other people involved in the situation are going to agree with you and whether they are going to help or hinder you. This may depend, for example, on whether they feel listened to or supported by you, or whether they feel scared or threatened by you. To make things more complicated, people are not all the same in how they react. Some people are very organised, some are unpredictable, some have strong views and opinions whilst others prefer to act quietly in the background. And people usually do things for a reason. For example, you may offer to help a friend do their homework, because you want to borrow something from them in return. People may also want you to do things for them, even if they don't say this directly – remember what you learned in Session 2 about external influences.

You cannot predict how events and actions may turn out, but you can think through the consequences of your actions for you and others, to help you make more effective decisions or to achieve your goals, especially if you want other people's support or to bring them with you.

Let's look at this further using the example of 2021 riots in the Shankill area in Northern Ireland.

Activity 2: Exploring the consequences

15 minutes

Read the example below based on the events of riots in the Shankill area in West/North Belfast. You can also rewatch the video from [Session 1](#). As you read, take notes on your thoughts about how the actions of the rioters might affect all those involved.

In April 2021, amidst political tensions over **Brexit**, social media was buzzing with messages urging young people to get out onto the streets, stand up for their rights and defend their community. Young people came onto the streets and there were clashes between the PSNI [local police force] and local youth. At Lanark Way, which is an interface area (a boundary area between communities), a bus was burned and there were also clashes between **PUL** and **CNR** young people and petrol bombs thrown by

both sides. The events were covered by local, national and international media and the Shankill and other Loyalist and interface areas became the focus of news reports about violence and rioting and sectarian tensions (tensions between different political and religious communities). Community leaders urged calm. Politicians publicly condemned the attacks. Some also stated their 'fears of further unrest on the streets of Northern Ireland over the Brexit protocol'. Some young people when interviewed by the media stated that this was about 'getting our voice heard'.

Now fill in this table on the consequences you have thought about for all those involved.

Table 2: Exploring the consequences

Who are all the people involved?	What are the possible consequences of the riots for each of these actors? How are they affected by the riots?
Young people	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
The PSNI (Police)	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Local bus driver	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Politicians	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Community leaders	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
The national media	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Unknown people/groups on social media	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Local residents	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Other?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

Discussion

Table 2 (completed): Exploring the consequences

Who are all the people involved?	What are the possible consequences of the riots for each of these actors? How are they affected by the riots?
Young people	The riots may result in young people being physically hurt, being expelled from school, being labelled as troublemakers, getting arrested, getting a criminal record, getting into trouble with their parents, losing friends who don't agree with their actions, going down a path they didn't intend to.
The PSNI (Police)	The police being physically hurt or heightened tensions between police and local youth.
Local bus driver	The bus driver being physically or emotionally hurt, unable to return to work, losing their job, trauma.
Politicians	Politicians gaining greater prominence, support for their particular political cause, provide leverage for wider politics.
Community leaders	Community leaders being physically hurt, having to deal with increasing community tensions, the loss of trust and/or negative perceptions of their community.
The national media	Members of the media being physically hurt, getting a good news story or good ratings for their media outlet.
Unknown people/groups on social media	Supporting other people's political or criminal agenda, fuelling their work, fuelling misinformation.
Local residents	Local residents feeling fearful or unsafe, losing their jobs, homes or money because of the damage, fuelling community tensions, bringing the community into disrepute.
Other?	

This activity may have helped you to think about your actions too. You can apply this process to any problem or dilemma you face, to help you think through the consequences of your actions.

2 Making decisions

Making decisions can be difficult and complicated. It can be hard to juggle different information, your feelings, the views of others and the limited sets of choices you might feel you are facing. But there are lots of different decision-making tools you can use to help you make the decision that is right for you. When faced with a decision on what course of action to take, you could start by thinking creatively and mapping your thoughts about the problem. Mind maps, which you were introduced to in Session 1, help you to visualise your thoughts and come up with new ideas using words, colours and images. In [Session 1, Video 4](#), William talked about Tony Buzan's (1942–2019) theory of whole brain thinking and the use of mind maps to open up the creative side of your brain.

In [Session 2](#) you looked at ways of thinking critically about information before taking action, including expanding your sources, asking questions and using fact checking tools. In this session, Session 3, you have already learned about ways to expand the range of possibilities and explanations, by thinking like a detective and using your skills of deduction. And you have used a framework for thinking through the consequences from different perspectives. So how can you pull all these tools together to help you make decisions?

2.1 De Bono's 6 thinking hats

One powerful thinking tool for making decisions is Edward De Bono's 6 Thinking Hats technique. You may have come across this already but if not, De Bono (1933–2021) came up with this tool to help people step outside their usual way of thinking or to become more aware of how other people may think about an issue, by playing different roles.

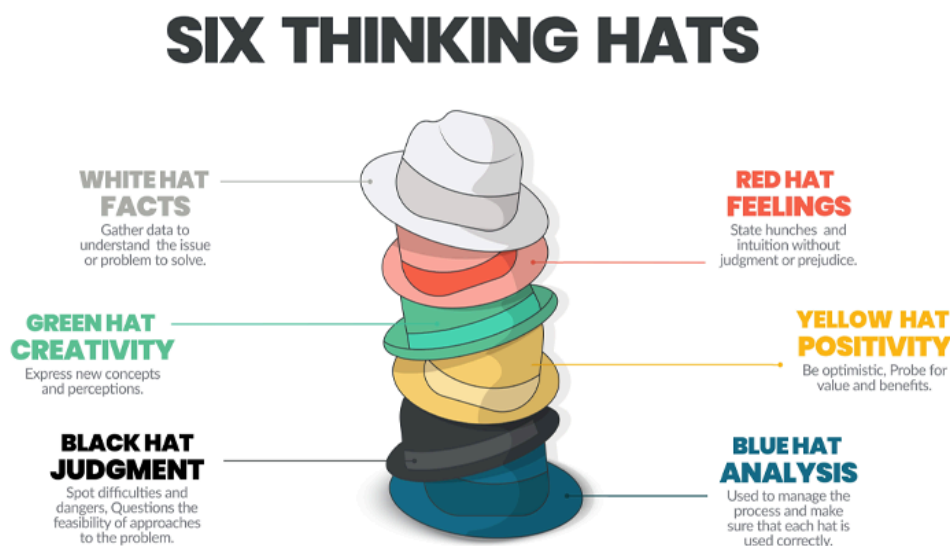


Figure 6: Edward De Bono's 6 Thinking Hats technique

As you can see each hat represents a distinct type of thinking. The following short film will introduce you to De Bono's technique and how to use it.

Activity 3: Introducing De Bono's 6 thinking hats

15 minutes

Watch this short film [Introduction to De Bonos 6 thinking hats](#) (duration: 2 minutes) before answering the following questions.

1. What does De Bono's 6 thinking hats technique allow you to do?

- ☐ Look at a problem from one perspective.
- ☐ Look at a problem from a number of different perspectives.
- ☐ Ignore a problem.

2. What premise or theory is De Bono's technique based on?

- ☐ The human brain thinks in a number of distinct ways.
- ☐ The human brain only looks at things in one way.
- ☐ These perspectives can be challenged.

3. What does the yellow hat stand for?

- ☐ Positive thinking.
- ☐ Intuition and emotion.
- ☐ Creativity.

2.2 How to use the 6 thinking hats

By 'wearing' each of the 6 Thinking Hats in turn, you can gain a better understanding of the issues you face – and the best ways forward. Each hat gives you a different perspective for thinking about a problem, and it also helps you to understand how other people might think about the situation too.

When using the 6 hats technique, try using the blue hat first and last. This hat is about thinking about the bigger picture and how you are going to solve it. You can decide the main question you want to answer and the order in which to put on the other hats.

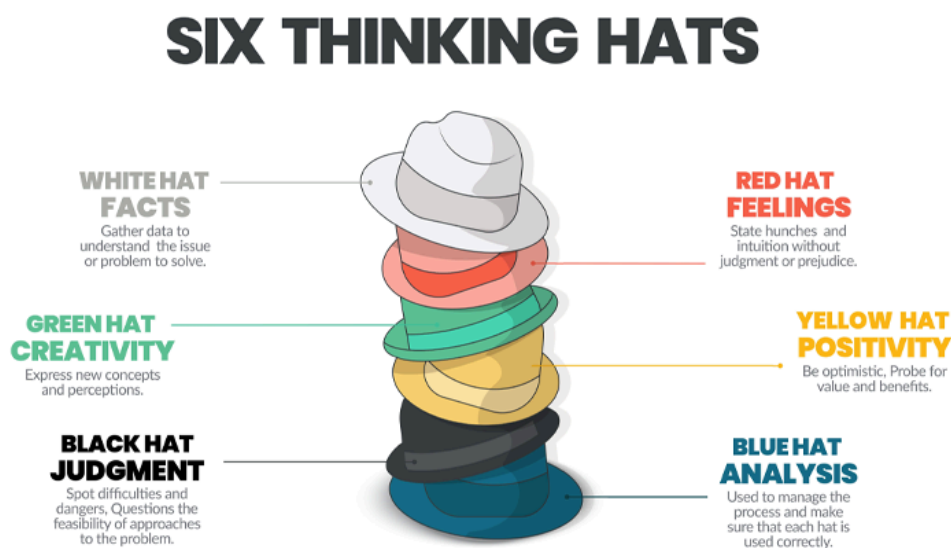


Figure 6 (repeated): Edward De Bono's 6 Thinking Hats technique

Let's take the decision on whether or not to use street protests and rioting as a way to get your voice heard.

Blue hat: Wear the blue hat to frame your question. For example: 'Is rioting the best way for us as young people to get our voice heard?' 'What information do I need?' 'Whose views do I need to consider?'

For example:

- do you need to consider the facts (white hat)
- what you are feeling (red hat)
- look at potential problems or risks and evaluate (black hat)
- think positively (yellow hat)
- come up with different ideas and solutions (green hat).

If you put the blue hat on again at the end of the exercise, then with this organisational hat on you can pull together all the different perspectives to help you decide what you want to do.

Here are some of the alternative solutions Dylan suggested in his case for what young people could do to get their voice heard, instead of getting involved in the riots.

'If you want to get your voice heard, go to someone, your local youth group or your mum to try and see if she knows anyone to get your voice heard, you could go to your local politicians or your representatives or if you really wanted you could go down to the **Shankill Mirror** or into your youth group and say look this here is wrong. This happened and maybe they could help you sort it out before it turns into violence.'

2.3 Pulling it all together

Now it's time to pull all these skills together. Imagine there is a problem or issue you are concerned about, where you want to take action which leads to a positive outcome. It could be an issue like someone is being bullied or a concern you have about climate change or a lack of sports facilities or the closure of your local youth club. How would you decide the best way of getting your voice heard using De Bono's 6 hats? You can do this next exercise yourself or with other people.

Activity 4: How would you make your voice heard for positive change?

10 minutes

You can use the issue 'School Uniforms should be abolished' or you can choose you own.

Table 3: Making your voice heard

Your issue:

[add your chosen issue here]

The question: **How can you make your voice heard?**

Blue hat: organisation planning the process

Provide your answer...

Green hat: creative thinking	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Red hat: gut feelings and instincts	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Yellow hat: benefits and values	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Black hat: problems and risk	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
White hat: the facts/ information gathering	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

Discussion

There is not a right or wrong way to do this activity. The aim is that you explore the question through a range of different thinking styles and that you challenge each of these different perspectives too. Hopefully you were able to use some of the new skills you have developed from doing this course when thinking things through from each perspective, before arriving at your decision.

Thinking creatively, like any new skill, is something that you can learn. And the more you practice the better thinker you can become. You can use these thinking skills to solve problems and to help you make decisions, no matter how big or small. You can also use mind maps which you learned about in Session 1. Using your creativity and imagination when thinking about your future will expand the range of choices you have when solving a problem or when working towards the goals you aspire to or to explore new possibilities.

3 Being true to yourself

In Sessions 1 and 2 you looked at how the societies in which you grow up can influence how you see yourself in the world, both positively and negatively, limiting the range of choices available to you. This is particularly the case in societies and communities where there is a history of violence, like Northern Ireland and the Shankill area where the boys you met are growing up and where William works.

You also heard William's story of growing up in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and how he became involved in the conflict as a 15-year-old boy before being imprisoned in the Maze and Long Kesh prison. Reflecting on his actions in part 2 of his story, William described how:

'As a young man with the limited opportunities that I felt was presented to me, I had a limited imagination. I didn't aspire to be anything beyond the immediacy of my situation.'

Your choices can also be constrained or limited by the context within which you live, and by the knowledge and information as well as the opportunities you have access to. These factors can influence how others see you, as well as how you see yourself and the choices you make. But they do not need to shape or determine your whole future. As William explained in his story, learning how to think more deeply widened his imagination and gave him more choices and the freedom to create a different future and to take different actions to make change happen.

3.1 How Marcus Rashford used his voice

There are all sorts of ways in which you can break the mould and find your own voice. Your voice will be unique to you, shaped by your values, your community or where you grew up, and your experiences in life. Look at the following example of how the footballer Marcus Rashford, used his voice.

'As a Black man from a low-income family in Wythenshawe, Manchester, I could have been just another statistic. Instead, due to the selfless actions of my mum, my family, my neighbours, and my coaches, the only stats I'm associated with are goals, appearances and caps. I would be doing myself, my family and my community an injustice if I didn't stand here today with my voice and my platform and ask you for help'.

(Marcus Rashford, public letter to MPs April 2020)



Figure 7: Mural of Marcus Rashford kicking down the door of Number 10 Downing Street to end food-poverty. Old Trafford, Manchester.

In 2021 at the age of 22, Marcus Rashford was named by *Time Magazine* as one of Next 100 most influential people to change the world. Marcus is a professional footballer from Manchester in England and an anti-poverty activist. He grew up in South Manchester, on what was once the largest council housing estate in Europe. His mum Melanie, a single parent, worked three jobs to support the family, but still struggled to put food on the table. Marcus and his brothers and sisters, like many others in their community, were often hungry growing up and relied on breakfast clubs and free school meals. This experience shaped his choices, his values and his activism as an adult.

‘Thank you for sticking up for our kids who needed a voice, here on Merseyside and across the country.’

(Everton fans)

In March 2020, during the first COVID-19 lockdown, schools were closed across the UK and in many other countries around the world too. In response Marcus used his twitter account to highlight the food poverty crisis facing families across the UK, many of whom had relied on free school meals. He set up the Child Food Poverty Task Force and raised £20 million pounds for the FareShare charity providing food for foodbanks and meals for struggling families. But Marcus also realised food poverty was a bigger social issue and that it needed a political solution. Drawing on his own experiences of hunger as a child, he wrote a public letter to MPs which he shared on twitter putting public pressure on the British Prime Minister to continue to provide free school meal vouchers to 1.3 million children during the school holidays. Marcus followed up with a campaign to extend the voucher scheme into the winter and won. He continues to campaign for struggling families today. His community has put up murals in his honour. His work has even united rival

football communities across the country who value the work he does for all struggling families.

Activity 5: Marcus Rashford's story

15 minutes

Now watch this [short film](#) about Marcus Rashford. Based on what you read and on watching this film, answer the following questions:

- How has Marcus's personal experience shaped his understanding of food poverty?
- How does he use his voice for communities with similar experiences to his?
- What if anything from his story inspires you to use your own voice?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

In this short film, Marcus explains why he took the actions he did. He talks about his desire to wake people up to child food poverty. He makes connections to the Covid Pandemic and the response to it at a government and policy level and asks why the same hasn't happened in tackling child food poverty. Your response to this film and how Marcus Rashford's story inspires you will be personal to you.

Everyone's voice, including yours, is unique and when you find your voice it will be shaped by your experiences and underpinned by your personal values. Identifying these values is what you will be looking at next.

3.2 Knowing your values

A person's core values can be thought of as a set of principles that shape their attitudes, behaviour and decision making, influencing their interactions with other people or groups. Core values can relate to personality traits or characteristics, for example being kind, honest or truthful and they can be shaped by life experience, culture and background.

In Session 1 you answered the question 'Who am I?' and you may have identified some of your core values through that exercise. [You can see what you wrote here.](#)

You may also have your own important principles, such as honesty and integrity, that you do your best to follow. In this section, we will explore how you can become more aware of your core values, thinking about how they can be used to help you to make decisions that affect your life.

Activity 6: Core values

15 minutes

1. Read through the list and consider any values that speak to you. If you would rather print this off and circle them, [download the list here](#).
2. Add any other core values that you have already identified, that do not appear on this list.

3. Look at all the values you have circled (and any you have added) and choose 6 that seem most significant to you. These can be described as your core values.

Table 4: Core values (part 1)

Accountability	Curiosity	Honesty	Parenting	Success
Achievement	Dignity	Hope	Patience	Teamwork
Adaptability	Diversity	Humility	Patriotism	Thrift
Adventure	Environment	Humour	Peace	Time
Altruism	Efficiency	Inclusion	Perseverance	Tradition
Ambition	Equality	Independence	Personal fulfilment	Travel
Authenticity	Ethics	Initiative	Power	Trust
Balance	Excellence	Integrity	Pride	Truth
Beauty	Fairness	Intuition	Recognition	Understanding
Being the best	Faith	Job security	Reliability	Uniqueness
Belonging	Family	Joy	Resourcefulness	Usefulness
Career	Financial stability	Justice	Respect	Vision
Caring	Forgiveness	Kindness	Responsibility	Vulnerability
Collaboration	Freedom	Knowledge	Risk -taking	Wealth
Commitment	Friendship	Leadership	Safety	Well-being
Community	Fun	Learning	Security	Wholeheartedness
Compassion	Future generations	Legacy	Self-discipline	Wisdom
Competence	Generosity	Leisure	Self-expression	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Confidence	Giving back	Love	Self-respect	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Connection	Grace	Loyalty	Serenity	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Contentment	Gratitude	Making a difference	Service	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Contribution	Growth	Nature	Simplicity	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Cooperation	Harmony	Openness	Spirituality	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Courage	Health	Optimism	Sportsmanship	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Creativity	Home	Order	Stewardship	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

Now in the table below enter your 6 core values across the top. For each core value, try to identify an area where you have practised this core value already in your life and an area where you would like to practise this value in future (see the examples below).

Table 4: Core values (part 2)

Core values	Example: kindness	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3		Value 4
What I have done	Helped a friend fix their bike.	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>		<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Things I could do	Be kinder to my sister, who I tend to shout at.	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>		<i>Provide your answer...</i>

Once you are aware of your core values you can think about how certain choices might be in keeping or in conflict with your core values.

Take a look at this example: Alex has listed kindness and friendship as two of her core values. Within her friendship group she becomes aware that Josie has been giving Susan a really hard time, calling her names and excluding her from the group.

Consider Alex's options below and choose which are compatible with her values and which are in conflict with them?

- ☐ Option 1: say and do nothing.
- ☐ Option 2: have a word with Josie and ask her to stop picking on Susan.
- ☐ Option 3: have a chat with Susan and check if she is OK and how she has been feeling.

As you think about your future, keep your core values in mind. This will help you in making decisions that feel right for you, rather than doing what others expect of you or making decisions that don't seem compatible with your values. By being true to your values in how you act, this will also help you achieve your aspirations for how others see you.

4 The power of collective action

The global COVID-19 pandemic which began in 2020 has highlighted the importance and value of local community groups and of people working together to provide self-help and support when times are hard. This has been the case in societies across the world in times of crises or in response to political or social needs. There are likely to be community groups in your area you can be part of to make a difference around the issues that matter to you locally.

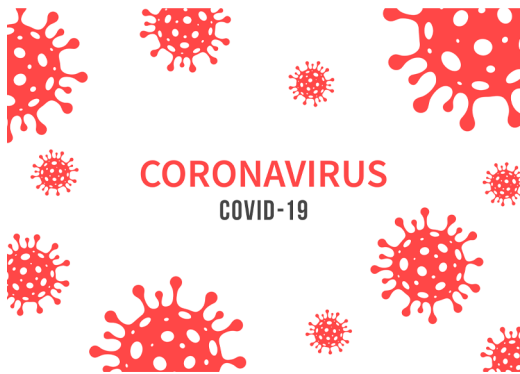


Figure 8: COVID-19

As you learned in Session 1 however, your relationship with your community can be complex. Communities can provide a sense of belonging, solidarity and protection and they can also label you or place limitations or expectations upon you. Yet, as you heard in William's story in Session 2 your role in your community is not fixed. It can change as you change and grow and you can also expand what community or communities you belong to and even forge new communities to help you with your goals.

In William's case, for example, he used education and self-reflection during his time in prison, to understand the social and political context he had grown up in and to clarify his values and how he wanted to make change happen positively. But he found upon his release that the community he had left as a boy had not changed. As he explained:

'We were still living separately; we were still worshipping separately; we were still employed separately; we were still housed separately; we were still socialising separately...'

The community he had left was also not welcoming to him because of his past. So he forged new communities based around his interests and values. For example, he moved to a mixed (PUL and CNR) community and educated his children in an integrated school. He nurtured connections with people who shared similar views, including other Loyalists who were involved in community conflict transformation, and later set up a community group to do this kind of work based in the Shankill community.

If you have a clear sense of your core values you will find it easier to find your own voice within your community or communities.

4.1 Becoming wiser

After the riots in the Spring of 2021, some of the young people making this course took part in cross community projects as well as working with William. In the following conversation between three of the boys, they reflect on the riots and how things have changed since then. You will hear them talk about their relationship with young Republicans before the riots and what happened when they spent time with them through a cross community youth project in the summer. Now listen to an audio clip from this conversation.

‘When you mature and you grow up you realize, focus on yourself. Don’t focus on the crowd you’re with. Don’t do the things you’re pressured into doing’.

(Boy 1)

Activity 7: Boys’ conversation on ‘becoming mates’

20 minutes

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 1: Boys conversation on ‘Becoming mates’

- Is there anything you could relate to in this conversation?
- What do you think the boys mean by ‘becoming wiser’ or ‘more mature’?
- What did this make you think about your own relationships with young people from different communities?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

What you took from this conversation will be personal to you. But there are a number of points you could pick up from this conversation. The boys forged new connections by spending time with CNR young people and getting to know them. While in the past they would have been organising fights over social media, the boys describe how they would now be the ones working with the other side to stop fights. Becoming more mature for them in short, means learning how to think for themselves.

As the boys point out, facing difficult situations and political happenings is part of life as young people. It is also something you can learn how to deal with. Becoming more mature involves knowing your own values and focussing on these and not on following the crowd. They also talk about their hopes for this course and that it is something that will open other young people’s minds, show another perspective, and help other young people find their voice and make a difference in their communities.

The boys describe being part of building the future in their communities and they see participating with cross-community groups as part of that process. (In Northern Ireland

cross-community usually means people from PUL and CNR groups working together). Importantly, they describe how they connected with other young people who want to talk rather than fight. Finding connections with young people that share your values and working together on common problems can be a powerful way to make change happen.

4.2 Making connections

Remember that you don't have to be completely defined by your group membership or community, but rather that you have diverse identities, made up from a wide range of group memberships and your personal qualities and core values. In every community there will be groups you can be part of to make a difference around the issues that matter to you locally. And if they don't exist you can work with your school, your youth group or others to create them.

Activity 8: Identifying community connections

10 minutes

Take a few minutes to think about these questions. If you are in a group, you can discuss this with others.

- Are there any groups in your locality where you can meet other young people from different communities?
- If so, what do they do?
- Are there any groups that give you an opportunity to work on the issues you are concerned about locally as young people?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

There are all sorts of groups, you can be part of. For example, you may have thought about community support groups set up by local people during times of hardship such as the COVID-19 pandemic; football and other sports groups; music and culture groups; youth groups; social history groups with older people or community groups working on history or conflict issues.

Thinking about the issues facing you and other young people can help you to make new connections through these common concerns. You might also be able to create new relationships and communities that cross the boundaries of where you live to tackle these issues and challenges from campaigning for a new youth centre or sports facilities to making your voice heard about climate change.

4.3 Becoming a positive changemaker

People find their voices in all sorts of ways to highlight the issues they are concerned about, to fulfil their aspirations and to bring about change. The boys who are making this course have used their experiences to help other young people to think differently, and to change people's perspectives of them and their community.



Figure 9: Group illustration from left to right: Dylan, Matty, Brandon, Adam (top row) and Ashton, Ryan, Stephen, William (bottom row).

Marcus Rashford uses his experience and voice (and social media) for families and communities across the country living with food poverty. Emma Gonzalez, Cameron Kasky and other Parkland students in their darkest hour used their experience and voices to speak for better gun laws and in doing so built a community of hundreds of thousands of other young people, through their social movement 'March for our Lives'. So let's look at what you might be able to do in your communities?

Activity 9: How can you make a positive contribution?

15 minutes

Now take a few minutes to think about all you have learned before reflecting on the following question. You can discuss your reflections with your friends or community worker or others in your class if you are studying this in school.

How can you draw on your experience and your values to make a positive contribution to your community or society?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The contribution you can make either individually or collectively by working with others on common concerns will be personal to you, or the group you are working with, your experiences and values.

People find their voices in all sorts of ways, to highlight the issues they are concerned about, to fulfil their aspirations and to bring about change. Remember, community is not something that is fixed. It is something that is created by people over time and can be remade by people, and this includes you.

Activity 10: Time to reflect

10 minutes

Before you finish, take a look at your hopes and aspirations for your future and the qualities you want others to see in you, [from the beginning of this session](#).

Do you still feel the same? Is there anything you want to add now you have had time to explore, and imagine different possibilities? Think through the consequences and what you might want for yourself.

Provide your answer...

5 Summary

Sometimes you may feel you have to act in a particular way, for example, because that's how your community is seen or what people expect of you, based on the past. This can have life changing consequences for you and others around you.

In this course you have learned the power of thinking things through before you act. You have explored how community might shape your action and choices and you have considered how you can create your own understanding of community. You have identified your personal values. You explored some of the reasons why you make the choices you do, developed your skills for thinking critically and skills to help you make the right decisions for you. And you have considered the role you want to play in your community or communities and how you can go about doing this.

As you get ready to use your new skills and voice in the world, take a few minutes to listen to this final message from William.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 2: Final word from William](#)



Now you have completed the course, you should be able to:

- consider how external factors shape personal identity and choices
- ask questions and think critically about information
- explore different perspectives
- broaden thoughts about the future and develop a voice to work with others for a positive change.



Figure 2 (repeated): Group illustration from left to right: Dylan, Matty, Brandon, Adam (top row) and Ashton, Ryan, Stephen, William (bottom row). William (Project Director for the ACT Initiative) is on the right of the group.

Thank you for doing our course and for taking the time to think about things that matter to you. We hope you enjoyed it.

Protecting your mental health and wellbeing

Please refer to the [Sources of support](#) page if you notice a negative emotional reaction to aspects of the course materials.

Acknowledgements

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