# A study of cultural agency and an analysis of its application

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# Declaration

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## Abstract

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## Shauna Garry

This study is concerned with analysing the application of cultural agency in two distinct cases. The case in Bogotá, Colombia, examines the promotion of civic awareness through the use of mime artists and how this led the city to embark on a major cultural experiment, under the instruction of the city mayor, Antanas Mockus. The case in Dublin, Ireland, examines RTE's documentary *John Lonergan's Circus* to highlight the value Art has, through the use of circus training, as an educational tool for students from socially disadvantaged areas in Dublin.

The pedagogical theories of Paulo Freire and the literature written by Doris Sommer, based on cultural agency, inform the research. This research contributes to the literature by examining the value aesthetics and the Arts can have both socially and pedagogically, when used in innovative ways.

This research follows a qualitative methodology; case study is referred to throughout, while interviewing allowed for analysis of data. The application of cultural agency was examined to highlight benefits of aesthetic approaches to educational endeavours. The findings show that specific themes are heavily linked to people's participation in cultural, social and educational activities.

Overall, the findings indicate that when the Arts are used in innovative ways to promote civic engagement and social involvement, new understandings, outlooks and interpretations can flourish. It also highlights that when aesthetics are introduced to a learning environment, the attitude of those involved shifts significantly and people with a more vested interest are more receptive to learning and committed to development.

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## Introduction

This opening chapter of the thesis comprises two sections. The first section introduces the study by presenting the principal research concern and research questions, the context within which the research is situated, the purpose of the research and the motivation driving it. The second section provides a brief summary of each chapter of the thesis.

## 1.1 Presentation of the Study

The current study is concerned with the role the Arts can play in promoting active civic participation. It draws upon, and adds to, an existing body of research exploring the connection between the promotion of aesthetics in education, cultural agency and civic involvement. Given the rapid and increasing diversification of the needs and skills required to fully participate in $21^{st}$ century life, such research is both timely and highly relevant.

The aim of the present study is to explore, in depth, how the Arts and innovative approaches assist in the promotion of civic participation. Several enabling and disabling factors are identified, analysed and discussed in chapter 6 – Research Findings. Through the identification of obstacles to and facilitators of civic participation, this study hopes to highlight the value of the Arts in education and in the development of soft-skills. An aim of this study is also to gain a greater understanding of the link between the Arts and social participation.

This study is driven by a strong personal interest in aesthetic education and the promotion of civic participation by cultural agents. It is inspired by a personal belief that the Arts are a vehicle which can engage young people and can be used as a catalyst to recognise and develop non-academic skills; skills which are indispensable in our ever-evolving modern society. It is my firm belief that if the Arts had a more prominent place in the educational system, it would significantly facilitate in the identification of the skills of young people. Through engaging in the Arts, skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving and lateral-thinking are developed and enhanced.

This engagement in all likelihood would also lead to a drop in crime in areas where there is a high crime rate, and in addition it could lead to a drop in unemployment in economically disadvantaged areas. It is my belief that if these skills are developed early and given a platform on which to flourish, there would be significant improvements in the lives of these young people involved in the projects discussed in this thesis, and also for society.

## 1.2 Outline of the case studies

This dissertation will examine a Latin American and an Irish example of Cultural Agency. The city of Bogotá, Colombia, once known as the worst city in the world, was transformed over a fifteen-year period starting in the 1990s. It became the subject of social, cultural and political experimentation. The leader of the experiment, a quirky university professor, Antanas Mockus stumbled into the political arena 'backwards' with his election as Mayor; and through his

innovative cultural politics he dragged the once downtrodden and violent city forward into an era of regeneration of the public space. Bogotá morphed into a playground for creative games and was reclaimed by its citizens for the shared benefit of the community. Through cultural agency and active learning, new generations of *bogotanos* were educated in critical consciousness and according to the CIA the 'most dangerous city in the world'[1] was given a facelift and emerged from the treatment with fresh new eyes and a new appreciation for public space.

Mockus knows the value art holds to break the unproductive and dangerous cycle of violence and corruption. He promotes the playing of games to participate in building a sense of citizenship amongst his constituents in the hope that their renewed identity will forge new bonds, civic, commercial and legal and allow new ideas to spread and new interpretations to flourish.

The second case study will be based on RTE 1's TV documentary entitled John Lonergan's Circus (2013). John Lonergan is also an agent of culture and the ex-governor of Mountjoy Prison in Dublin.  His TV documentary on using the circus to educate young people from disadvantaged areas in Dublin was used as a tool to promote critical thinking, art in education and civic participation. This experiment proved successful in bridging the gap between those in society who are marginalised and not active in democratic practices and those who are not marginalised and participate in democratic practices. It showed that creative projects can allow for cultural collaborations to cultivate and promote cultural

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[1] http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Bogota,_Colombia

agency. Lonergan holds firm the belief that the Arts are a catalyst for connecting peoples and communities. There have been previous local initiative groups using similar theatrical performances such as circus acts to educate young people in a non-traditional way, but more in a manner that best suits the particular needs of the students and allows them to become cultured in a disciplined environment. John Lonergan uses the Belfast Community Circus to educate young people from disadvantaged areas to learn about teamwork and the importance of education in all its forms. The circus was used as a focus for the teenagers to engage in an alternative form of education, one that allows for discipline and commitment to be experienced. The project was considered to be a success, when the adolescents participated in a performance during the 2013 St. Patrick's Day festivities. This documentary was used to inform the researcher of the project and was used as a source to form the interview questions.

## 1.3 Chapter Outline and Structure of Thesis

This thesis comprises six chapters. Following the introductory chapter, in chapter 2, major theoretical approaches in the field of cultural studies and practical applications that are particularly applicable to the current study are presented.  It provides an outline of the work already done in the field of culture and its practical applications, and also on agency. Furthermore, pedagogical theories are examined, contextualised and analysed in order to frame the

research questions. Theories relating to the connection between the style of education and the likelihood of civic participation are discussed.

Chapter 3 presents a detailed review of literature relevant to the research topic. It highlights and reviews the existing literature in the field of cultural agency, civic participation and radical pedagogy. It explores how a new approach to obsolete social and educational practices allows for new concepts to manifest.

Chapter 4 details the specifics of the overall methodological approach of the study. The methodological framework and the approaches chosen in qualitative analysis are discussed and explained. It provides detailed information on relevant methodological concerns relating to the study. This includes a discussion on the choice of applying a qualitative methodological approach: case study research. Following this the selection process of the case studies is discussed. It also chronicles the research procedure, explains the process of data collection and analysis, and discusses a number of additional methodological issues, such as transcription and also the limitations of the study.

Chapter 5 focuses on cultural agency and the importance of the Arts in civic and social aspects. Research in education links practice and appreciation of arts with enhanced cognitive and social development (Archer 1996; Bertrand 2003; Freire 1989). It highlights the idea that the Arts, cultural agency, education and active civic participation are interlinked using a Latin American example as reference. In chapter 6 the research findings are presented. This chapter outlines the research findings of how the Arts and innovative approaches assist in the

promotion of civic participation in an Irish context. Additionally, in terms of the specific research findings, the study identifies important factors – enabling and hindering – which impact on young people's civic participation. Furthermore this chapter establishes the use of cultural agents in promoting civic engagement through non-traditional educational avenues and the value these have in providing a refreshing approach to social challenges. Chapter 7 concludes by summarising the study and presenting its contribution to existing knowledge. It also identifies possible topics for further investigation. The case on which I base this study is related to the education of marginalised communities from disadvantaged urban communities.

# Chapter 2 Literature Review

## Introduction

This research draws on the work of several acclaimed social theorists and academics working in the field of culture and social science, as well as authors from the fields of literature and languages over various decades and several continents. It also discusses and reviews relevant existing literature in the field of cultural agency, civic participation and radical pedagogy.

The relationship between culture and agency has been investigated by Doris Sommer, Margaret Archer, Jacques Rancière, Friedrich Von Schiller, and Immanuel Kant, and thus far the theory of culture within sociology and the connection between culture, power and economic life 'has displayed the weakest analytical development of any key concept' (Archer, 1996, p.1). Karl Marx is acclaimed for his ability to connect the three concepts of culture, power and economic life, but he was unable 'to theorise the autonomy of culture … to view human action in a deterministic framework' (Smith and Riley, 2008, p.8). Many attempts have been made to define culture, however it has yet to be defined in a way that allows us to form a working concept; that is to say, we have only managed to define culture ideologically but not operationally. More often than not we tend to focus on the cultural differences (linguistic, social, political), rather than on the structures of culture.

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in the question of civic participation. This re-emergence of civic-participation education or perhaps more accurately, activation, has led to an analysis of how a person, institution

or activity can form a critical and cultural awareness in some members of society and not others. This chapter reviews literature concerning active participation in society, the role cultural or civic agency plays in our interpretation of public space and how a new approach to defunct social practices can allow novel ideas to flourish.

This chapter provides an outline of the work already done in the field of culture and its practical applications, and also on agency in order to demonstrate the links between two theories: cultural agency and social culture. These will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

## 2.1 Critical analysis of previous studies

Freire has written the most complete synthesis to date of pedagogy and the promotion of freethinking models to promote well-informed problem-solving alumni who are educated in an alternative way to allow them the opportunity, and the tools, to free themselves from the restraints that have impeded their historical, political, cultural and social progress.

Freire's works, although very detailed, lack clear structure which could be interpreted as unorganised and eclectic. His ideas have been grouped into themes to provide some sort of order and cohesion. The themes are presented as problems; problems that need to be solved. One of the key themes in his works is that of dialogue. Dialogue takes precedent in a lot of Freire's works. He sees dialogue as a fundamental element of education. Dialogue or, the word, is composed of reflection and action. As humans, Freire states, we not only exist,

but in this existence we come into the world and transform it with our words and works. As humans we share a dialogical relationship with the world around us, as Freire argues in his pioneering book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* In this study Freire argues that dialogue-based approach aims to cultivate creative acts not dominate. Humans learn to contemplate critically the environment in which they find themselves and this in turn, when viewed as a problem that needs to be solved, through the educative process of dialogue leads to action.

Freire adds another observation. He maintains, and perhaps Margaret Archer would agree, that the oppressed people strive to escape the clenches of poverty. However for the few who achieve this, they in turn become with oppressors and in some cases become worse and more brutal than the oppressors themselves.

Two decades later in the eighties in her publication *Culture and Agency* (1988), Margaret S. Archer arrived at the same conclusion; education needs to be dialogue-based. Freire and Archer concur that historically we have not experienced a dialogue-based education and as such one can deduce that anti-dialogical cultural action explicitly or implicitly aims to preserve, within its own collective formation, conditions which support its own means. While Freire refers to this culture as oppressive, Archer applies the more animated term of 'puppet-masters' in *Culture and Agency* (1996). According to Archer in the same study, culture and agency are never more political than when an individual tries to break the cycle. Like Freire before her, Archer writes of attempts to defeat the limitations of society, which she refers to as downward conflation and upward conflation. The former sees society dominating the people, whereas in

the latter, society is shaped by the people. This analysis of the culture of society and societal culture is concordant with the conclusion reached by Freire.

Archer's *Culture and Agency* (1988) is a formative piece on social theory, comprehensively making the case for the role of culture in sociological thought. The publication showed that the 'problems' of culture and agency and structure and agency could be solved using the same analytical framework i.e. a pedagogical framework that allowed for a dialogue-based approach to instruction. She discusses how the introduction of this style of education would allow those who partake in education to analyse problems that directly affect them and to learn how to become agents in their communities in order to resolve these issues. Developing this style of instruction, she posits, allows agents of culture to rationalise and interpret their world and the vehicle for this has been identified by Freire and Sommer as the Arts. According to Archer, agency itself is seen as a 'dilemma is social theory' (1996, p.xi) and a similar view to that is evident in the works of Paolo Freire, where he repeatedly expresses culture and agency as a problem; something that needs to be addressed, and through study, habit and discovery needs to be solved. Agency throws up many different questions and challenges when looking to define it.

## 2.2 The Vehicle for Agency

As mentioned the catalyst for this dissertation was *Cultural Agency in the Americas* (2006), a book edited by Doris Sommer. Sommer, as already stated, is a professor of Romance Languages and Literatures at Harvard University.

Sommer's writing has been largely influenced by Freire and some of the more classical writers such as Schiller and Gramsci. Sommer believes that the only way to allow a marginalised people to better themselves is through culture. 'Culture', as she affirms, 'is the vehicle for agency' (2006, p.2). In order for social change to come about creativity needs to be linked with social contributions, hence society needs to become an enabler and promoter of culture.

## 2.3 Agents of Culture

Sommer shares similar beliefs to those of Archer and Freire; she too is an agent of culture. She works in the field of humanities and literature and combines her humanistic training and literacy to promote the reinvention of literature. In her publication *Cultural Agency in the Americas* (2006) she maintains that culture in the form of the Arts can teach students to form critical thinking techniques, judgement and to identify points of view. This skill set is a transferable one and as such can be applied to different fields. The combination of art and culture to create civic participation allows for unpredictable results and interpretations. She argues in *Art and Accountability* (2005) that art does not have the same weight to it in educational establishments as business, maths, science or law does, and she describes how she believes this is due to the failure of institutional and individual understanding that Art can generate viable social, political and economic activity. A common misconception is that Art holds no value in society other than an aesthetic one and this leads to a false claim that

Art is for art's sake and cannot participate in culture in the same way that mathematical, legal or commercial disciplines can.

Her publication *The Work of Art in the World: On Humanistic Education and Civic Agency* (2014) highlights the partnership between art and other areas of society as 'necessarily hybrid: conscientious cultural agency [that] depends on various skill sets to hitch stale and unproductive social patterns to the motor of unconventional interventions' (p.5). The Arts can be used as a vehicle to open up new spaces of appreciation, civic involvement and can allow students schooled in critical thinking to link the two in new ways that reinterpret the old mundane practices and views of tried and proven social regimes. In her most recent publication as stated at the opening of this paragraph, she proclaims 'between frustrated fantasies and paralysing despair, agency is a modest but relentless call to creative action, one small step at a time' (p.4).

Sommer advocates Antanas Mockus[2] as an exemplary cultural agent in various publications, such as *Cultural Agency in the Americas* and *Art and Accountability* because it was he who managed to use art to bring about cultural change in Bogotá. She describes how he was able to work towards emancipation by using the power of culture to force open the deadlock of politics that had taken hold of the Colombian capital and link creativity to social contributions. He motivated citizens to participate in the governance of their city and it is here that true cultural agency and civic participation met.

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[2] Antanas Mockus served two non-consecutive terms as mayor of the capital city of Colombia in the 1990s.

## 2.4 Doris Sommer and Cultural Agency in the Americas

The starting point for this research began with consulting *Cultural Agency in the Americas*. Sommer (2006) believes that the only way to allow a marginalised people to better themselves is through culture. 'Culture', as she affirms, 'is the vehicle for agency' (p.2). In order for social change to come about creativity needs to be linked with social contributions, hence society needs to become an enabler and promoter of culture. This premise informs issues that will be discussed throughout this study. Although Sommer's work concentrates on issues in Latin America, her themes can be transplanted to the Irish case of John Lonergan and his work with inner city young people and the involvement in circus training on which part of this work is based. Sommer's academic work is based on the struggles of the marginalised people in different countries on the American continent both North and South. She believes that because marginalised communities lack more formal education, the ruling government considers them unworthy constituents in society, and thus offers no assistance to these poverty stricken citizens to participate constructively in civic life, whether that is politically, or in educational forums such as secondary school or universities. Sommer believes that culture enables agency[3].

Professor Sommer's research interests originate from the novels of the 19th century that helped to strengthen new republics in Latin America via specific

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[3] The term agency in this dissertation is used to refer to a person, programme, or social activity that promotes and tries to maintain a sustainable cultural practice within a marginalised culture; this could be in the form of reading classes for the illiterate in the local community or the promotion of indigenous languages. The author of *Cultural Agency in the Americas* affirms that it is through culture that people become educated and being educated one can contribute successfully in social contexts.

aesthetics of minoritarian literature. Her reading list is a varying mixture of philosophers, political thinkers, artists, educators and policy-makers. She draws on the 19th century theories of Kant, Friederich von Schiller, Nietzsche, Hegel and Gramsci, always emphasising in her own works the importance of reinterpreting theories and readjusting our perspectives to suit the challenges of the 21st century. Sommer has put these theories to practice through her Cultural Agent Initiative in Harvard, and these have yielded very positive results. This will be discussed further in the following section.

She is currently involved in the 'pursuit of the constructive work in rights and resources that the Arts and the humanities contribute to developing societies' (Harvard University, 2013). She is the author of eight highly acclaimed books last sentence does not fit in well here. She is an expert in the field of Language, Culture and Art. Her research; theories on culture as a guiding force in the structure of sustainable societies show that Art has a value and should be respected as a way to interpret the world. Through the Arts, Sommer believes that ostracised communities and people can learn to better themselves and the circumstances in which they find themselves.

She stresses that by doing this we open up spaces of creativity and act more creatively. Sommer (2006) describes this as 'wiggle room' (p1). It is these spaces that are opened up when we allow culture to enable agency. The meaning resonates with a variety of public practices which link creativity with social contributions. If we take the case of a cultural agent trying to promote a cultural activity it is considered by Sommer that if the initiative was supported by

academia it would lead to further products of creation. When there is a marriage between practice and research it can open up and create new dynamic approaches to answer some of society's most neglected social challenges. Cultural agents confirm their power to be heard, and listeners display their own training and talent to read performances as social speech acts. This means, as Martín-Barbero spells out in Sommer's book,

> when the reciprocal dynamic between cultural activists and scholars works effectively, a creative practice can inspire an original scholarly essay…essays [that] represent a kind of reflective agency to stimulate civic debate.
>
> (Sommer, 2006, p.9)

Using artists as educators, students learn in a way that allows them to be expressive. When academics have the opportunity to work with and learn from artists new interpretations and solutions can be found and applied to a multitude of social issues.

## 2.4.1 Cultural Agents Initiative

The Cultural Agents Initiative allows people to collaborate and find new links between the hard sciences and business, and the humanities and social sciences. In Sommer's words, an "agent is a term that acknowledges the small shifts in perspective and practice... [that] move toward a collective change" (2005, p.262). She heads several cultural agency projects based in North America, as well as being an advocate of initiatives south of the US border. She believes that marginalised communities are seen to be uneducated and thus the ruling government see these as unworthy constituents in society, but they do not assist

these poverty stricken citizens to participate constructively in culture. Sommer has confidence in that culture enables agency.

In her various initiatives at Harvard, Sommer has applied her and Paulo Freire's shared theory and applied it to her particular context. A cultural agent can be described as a bridge between scholarly education and social participation. The ideals are to endorse the Arts and humanities as real social tools. In one project she heads called PRE-texts, she developed a literacy programme for marginalised communities. Her material was classic literature as a pre-text for other artistic outputs. Creating accompanying music to the literature or a poem led the students to learn skills in critical thinking and to link this to creativity. This style of education that allows academia to incorporate the aesthetic opens up a space from which new interpretations are found. Along with learning to appreciate the Arts, the participant has learned valuable lessons in developing imagination, judgement and critical awareness that the Arts can enhance our perception of the world and can be used as a tool to better the world.

## 2.5 Paulo Freire

The Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire also believed that culture empowered and that through participation and education people can free themselves from persecution. His revolutionary book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) illustrates this very premise. Freire's work is dedicated to the education of marginalised people. His teachings are based on bringing about social justice through innovative pedagogical practices. Pedagogy is a fundamental element of

empowerment because through the promotion of culture the recipients of this process become conscious of this lack of education and thus from this realisation they become critically aware and in turn active in their search for equality and education. This cultural action has its roots in Latin America; this is not surprising as it is developing world countries that need *Cultural Action for Freedom* from their oppressors, to use the title of Freire's book (1972).[4] Freire is one of the fathers of critical pedagogy, and has revolutionised this area of study in recent decades. Both Freire and Sommer agree that critical thinking is essential to break from oppression[5]. In order to break from this oppression there has to be a deliberate course/form of action. The objectives of this action are to transform the social, political, cultural structure. In other words, cultural action either serves to control or to free people. It either allows the pre-existing culture of control to continue or it is used as a tool by the oppressed to gain freedom. Freire avers in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that cultural action creates a dialectical relation of "permanence" and "change" (1989, p.179). Critical pedagogy is a teaching approach that attempts to help students question and challenge domination, and the beliefs and practices that dominate. The question now is how do we educate a generation to think critically and in a way that stimulates their desire to participate in civic life?

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[4] Paulo Freire, *Cultural Action for Freedom*. Harvard Educational Review: Cambridge, 1988.
[5] It must be noted that when the term 'oppression' it is used in the context that the oppression refers to not having cultural freedom or access to culture.

## 2.5.1 Cultural Action

One of Freire's main ideas that will be discussed in detail is the topic of cultural action. Cultural action theory is derived from a development of dialogical and antidialogical environments. To explain; we must first understand what a dialogical atmosphere represents. As humans we share a dialogical relationship with the world around us, as Freire states

> as beings of *praxis*, [we] differ from animals, which are beings of pure activity. Animals do not consider the world; they are immersed in it. In contrast, men emerge from the world, objectify it, and in doing so can understand it and transform it with their labour.
>
> (1993, p.106)

As humans we should actively participate in our world and practise reflection, in this reflection amendments and transformations can be made. As a contrast, antidialogical cultural action may mean the explicit or implicit aims to preserve, within its own collective formation, conditions which support their own means; a cultural mode of action that does not encourage active reflection and tries to halt or prevent changes and alterations.  It is this 'modality of action [that] involves the conquest of the people, their division, their manipulation, and cultural invasion' (p.181).

If we take the concept of invasion of a culture then as (ex-)colonies of civilised empires our education was never a process of mutual cooperation. An anti-dialogical approach was taken by the invaders; we as students of this invading culture were not encouraged to actively try to transform our circumstances for our greater good. Moreover we were fed the information; we were not permitted to question. The colonised society 'is dependent on the society which oppresses

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it and whose economic and cultural interests it serves' (Freire, 1989, p.181). In other words, in educational terms the student is deposited with information from the educator and must learn to memorise the given 'truths', but at no point is the learner asked or taught to question the teacher. The style of education that has evolved is for the student to be a passive learner and to absorb the prescribed information, while the teacher recites memorised information to the receiving depositories.

In his 1927 book entitled *The Public and Its Problems*, the American educational reformer John Dewey argues, like the educator Ken Robinson after him, that the educational system's objective is to train enough of the 'populous' sufficiently so that it can add to the democratic progression. Dewey's main theory outlined in this publication was that democracy is a continuous social movement that strives for the betterment of all individuals at every level on society. His and Freire's teachings are in accordance in that one cannot separate thought from action and that through living an experience, one can learn to learn from it and reflect on it and then emerge from it. Dewey expounds his belief that schools should be pragmatic in their instruction, places where active learning takes place and not solely passive listening; places that promote action and reflection from students, teachers and communities at large.

## 2.5.2 Critical Consciousness

Freire argues that we need a teaching approach that awakens critical consciousness. This needs to be constructed in a way that tries to shift attitudes from naïveté to a more decisive attitude whilst being taught.

He states that there needs to be an introduction to the democratisation of culture, 'a programme with humans as its Subjects rather than as patient recipients; a program that is itself an act of creation, capable of releasing other creative acts' (Freire, 1989, p.43). This is to say that in order for one to take critical action he/she needs to first critically understand his/her environment. But how can this transformation be facilitated? Freire offers this model:

a) a method that allows for dialogue, one that is critical and that is criticism-stimulating whilst being active in the process;

b) a model that aims to change the programme content of education;

c) a model that uses techniques such as thematic "breakdown" and "codification"

The techniques of "breakdown" and "codification" essentially mean grouping themes according to various social sciences; when this is done the theme is then classified (Freire, 1989, p.45).

A crucial element of this process lies in the belief that education can only be fruitful once it is based on a method of dialogue: that is a relationship that engages all participants and that allows all involved to participate as equals. This form of dialogical education relies on a 'horizontal relation of "empathy" between two "poles" who are engaged in a joint search' (ibid. p45). This leads to an atmosphere that is constructed in trust and allows for critique. Freire asserts that 'only dialogue truly communicates' (ibid. p45).

However it must be noted that for the most part anti-dialogue[6] has constituted a more significant part of our historical-cultural formation and is still present today. The teaching in the case of the Irish education system has traditionally not consisted of a dialogical approach; it was not, and for the most part is not constructed in that manner. To give an example: the Irish language is taught throughout primary and secondary education, but who can honestly say we have ever been engaged in dialogue during these lessons, where mutual engagement with the language has been fundamental? There have been steps taken recently to move away from this rote style of learning and towards a more interactive style of class; however it has to be acknowledged that the vast majority of lessons are teacher-centred and not student-driven.

In anti-dialogical education, A (educator) has authority over B (student) and the communication resembles a one-way system of reception for the student. Freire promotes a more dialogue-based schooling where A and B are both on equal footing and communication is a two-way system, whereby A learns with B and from B and vice versa, leading to a communicative and intercommunicative dialogue. In this proposal the students become aware that culture is a result of labour, and that this labour is an addition to the world they construct. One can create the world around them, through labour and promotion.

> In the antidialogical theory of action, cultural invasion serves the ends of manipulation, which in turn serves the ends of conquest, and conquest the ends of domination.
>
> (Freire, 1989, p.185)

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[6] In anti-dialogical education the communication is based on a one-way system of reception for the student. The student consumes the information provided by the educator. It is similar to rote learning.

By showing the marginalised the distinction between the two worlds: nature and culture, and recognising their role in each, they now reach the understanding that by participating in culture, they transform it. In Freire's project, the peasant farmers learned to read and write and through this form of dialogical education came 'to a new awareness of selfhood and begin to look critically at the social situation' in which they found themselves (Freire, 1996, p.11).

### 2.5.3 Cultural Synthesis

Freire discusses the idea of cultural synthesis and how in this model the actor who comes from another country or culture comes to learn and become educated in that world, they do not come to teach or preach. In this way it is apparent that cultural synthesis is a method of action. Cultural action is a tool for overruling the leading and marginalised culture; as stated earlier, thematic breakdown or investigation 'is expressed as an educational pursuit, as cultural action' (Freire, 1989, p.103). Freire believes there are no invaders in cultural synthesis; instead there are actors who critically analyse reality, but never allow the reality and the action to merge. In cultural synthesis, the actors who come from "another world" to the world of the people do not do so as invaders, rather they come to learn with the people and about the people's world (p.181). Cultural synthesis is a mode of action for confronting culture itself, as the preserver of the very structures by which it was formed. Therefore it can be said that in cultural synthesis there are no invaders; no imposed models. There are however, 'actors who critically analyse reality, [yet] never allow this analysis to separate from the action' (p.183). This idea of cultural synthesis directly links into the

discussion of this dissertation. Cultural synthesis makes it possible to resolve this disparity between the world view of the education system and that of the public, resulting in the enhancement of both. Cultural synthesis does not deny the differences between the two views; indeed it is based on these differences. 'It *does* deny the *invasion* of one *by* the other, but affirms the undeniable *support* each gives *to* the other' (p.181).[7] This research is concerned with this cultural synthesis because in the chosen case studies the cultural and social differences between those who design and administer education and those who are in receipt of it are central to the research. By creating a space in which conversations and dialogue are encouraged both viewpoints can learn and develop from each other in a supporting manner.

Although Freire's main area of interest is the education of illiterate people in Brazil and Latin America, his ideology can be transferred to this area of study, in relation to how the education of those on the margins of society is promoted, because fundamentally learning is about recognition; recognising our destinies and thinking critically about them. In order to promote a culture effectively we need to become agents of our own fate and systems of meanings. In other words we need to engage in a culture of awareness.[8]

## 2.6 Conceptualising Culture

Another key theorist in this field is Margaret Archer, whose research is held in high esteem amongst sociologists, social theorists and cultural agents alike. Her

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[7] Source emphasis
[8] This particular aspect of critical awareness will be discussed in detail in a subsequent section and an analysis of the chosen case will be discussed in Chapter 6: Research Findings.

book entitled *Culture and Agency* (1996) proposed a diagnostic fabric on which the issues relating to culture and agency can be pieced together. According to Archer, there are two levels to culture. She affirms that on the 'descriptive' level, culture is fundamental but still unclear. Unlike 'structures' that are 'analysed', cultures are 'grasped': instead of "cultural structures" there are endless "cultural differences". On the second level, which she calls the 'explanatory' level, culture is seen as both the supreme creator of social structure and the by-product that arises from social structure, but does not causally influence social structure. It appears from this definition that culture in this regard is a myriad of mass social practices and theories.

## 2.7 Gramsci's Theory on Cultural Education and Radical Pedagogy

Doris Sommer and Paulo Freire both draw on Gramscian work and theory to reinforce their standpoint. Marxist political ideology is subscribed to by Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire. Gramsci's main hypothesis challenges social theories that 'fail to acknowledge how pedagogical politics work in shaping and articulating the divide between diverse institutional and cultural formations' (Giroux, 1999 p.1). In other words, social theory only serves to explain the meaning of the political by 'being self-conscious about the way pedagogy works through its own cultural practices in order to legitimate its own motivating questions and secure particular modes of authority' (p.1). Gramsci goes further and challenges this by affirming that culture must recognise its part in politics and the consequences of this role. He posits that there is a relationship between

culture, pedagogy and power; thus he bases his theory on the trials that the educational system faces. Gramsci would argue that the educational system has been hijacked by corporations and commercial entities, using the system to manufacture students who are trained to take up positions suited to the global economic needs, thus a self-enlightening form of education is being replaced by one that serves the necessities of industries (p.15). These shortcomings have become more evident in recent economic crisis, especially in areas deemed to be marginalised or disadvantaged. Education has been promoted as the key to upward movement of social and economic standards: those who are most affected when this does not manifest itself to be true are the socially disadvantaged, by either their race or class. Education's objectives have been mutated over time, in the past education was considered a tool used in promoting participation in democratic life. According to Gramsci and Henry A. Giroux[9] it has now been reduced to the unique purpose of providing the global capitalist structures with human data processors, obvious in the lack of financial support for public schools in the United States, for example.

In Rethinking Cultural Politics and Radical Pedagogy in the Work of Antonio Gramsci (1999), Giroux believes that Gramscian theory has offered an important exploration of 'how education functions as a part of a wider political set of discourses and social relations aimed at promoting ideological and structural change' (p.6). When there is an education system that aims to educate the

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[9] Henry Giroux is an American scholar and cultural critic. One of the founding theorists of critical pedagogy in the United States, he is best known for his work in public pedagogy, cultural studies, youth studies, higher education, media studies, and critical theory.

student for life, not just to obtain a job or attend university, but a system that values the human spirit and allows the students time for reflection, self-critique and self-awareness, in this approach students are taught the skills necessary to live a more rounded life, not only to make a living. Gramsci's understanding and use of the word 'politics' would not solely refer to the law, institutions, activists or public interferences; his definition would be more aligned to same Rancière's definitions of the 'political', whereby politics is found on various levels of social life and practices, from speech and language, in the form of poetry and music[10]. It is here that the role of Art becomes entwined and associated with cultural politics.

Harold Entwistle in 1979, and more recently, E.D. Hirsch in 1996[11] are two conservative academics that have taken Gramsci's model for cultural education and using a selected and decontextualized reading of his work have in some fundamental ways misunderstood his thesis, but have nonetheless managed to apply it to their model of conservative educational discourse (1999, p.1-19). They use his thoughts to defend conservative education and to appropriate the promotion of a model that promotes education solely for economic wealth. They both argue for a standardised school curriculum that practises strict authoritarian rules and lacks dialogue-based lessons: the teacher is the well of knowledge and the students (the empty vase) take their understanding of the world from him/her. This notion is in stark contrast to Gramsci's and Freire's

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[10] Rancière, J. 2006. *The politics of aesthetics*. Continuum International Publishing Group.
[11] Harold Entwistle. 1979. *Antonio Gramsci: Conservative Schooling for Radical Politics*. Routledge. E.D. Hirsch 1996. The Schools We Need. Anchor Books.

position, who would argue that education needs to be progressive and to be conducted with equal participation from both educators and students; learning from one another in a manner that nurtures inquisition and critical thinking. Forgacs pens it when he states

> Gramsci begins not from the point of view of the teacher but from that of the learner, and he emphasizes that the learning process is a movement toward self-knowledge, self-mastery and thus liberation. Education is not a matter of handing out "encyclopedic knowledge" but of developing and disciplining the awareness which the learner already possesses.
>
> (1988, p.54)

The notion of a conservative form of education to Gramsci is one that promotes a dull classroom and hinders the development of a 'counterhegemonic project', the pupils are not taught to defend and fight for the freedom to rule and educate themselves in the way they feel fits their needs and interests (Giroux 1999, p10). If the working-class masses are to participate in the governing of the masses, then school should not be handled as an intellectual training camp, one that focuses solely on the intellectual finesse. A facility of critical analysis is what is needed alongside intellect. Gramsci is quoted by Giroux as stating that education should be

> …a school of freedom and free initiative, not a school of slavery and mechanical precision. The children of proletarians too should have all possibilities open to them; they should be able to develop their own individuality in the optimal way and hence in the most productive way for both themselves and society.
>
> (1999, p.1-19)

What is fundamental here in this form of education is that there is space in which students can reflect on themselves and learn to identify their individual

skills and talents, and moreover that the teachers are given the support to harness each student's talents. There is no emphasis on uniformity, whereby only one form of intelligence is accepted and rewarded rather, a personalised approach is promoted, something that is used in *alternative* education. In this style of pedagogy the instruction looks inward at the needs of the students and not the external objectives of the market. The student is central to the direction the lesson takes: their interests drive their education. Promoting their interests and passions as the focal point allows for an engagement with the personalised material and this can be the springboard from which creativity and critical thinking are given the opportunity to leap.

Gramsci believes –as Freire does- that the development of a critical faculty lends itself to a better understanding of how current ideology has been influenced by the ideology and knowledge of the past. A combination of these two styles of pedagogy would better benefit those in the classrooms. In 1916 he wrote:

> We must break the habit of thinking that culture is encyclopedic knowledge whereby man is viewed as a mere container in which to pour and conserve empirical data or brute disconnected facts which he will have to subsequently pigeonhole in his brain as in the columns of a dictionary so as to be able to eventually respond to the varied stimuli of the external world. This form of culture is truly harmful, especially to the proletariat. It only serves to create misfits, people who believe themselves superior to the rest of humanity because they have accumulated in their memory a certain quantity of facts and dates which they cough up at every opportunity to almost raise a barrier between themselves and others.
>
> (1916, p.200)

From this one can conclude that Gramsci's interpretation of education is one that combines different approaches, is disciplined in its instruction but flexible in allowing for debate, dialogue and critique from the students. Moreover, this type of education fosters a more fruitful and rewarding form of class. An equally progressive view of education is held by Freire who took inspiration from Gramsci before him and furthered his thesis on classroom dynamics and the role politics plays in education. He too argues that the student and teacher should both be active and mutual in the quest for understanding and knowledge. Cultural education is a major theme in both of these intellectuals' work and each have concluded that a cultural education must be one that promotes self-awareness and harnesses questioning in order for recipients to learn to tackle challenges on a bigger scale, related to society, politics and the ruling class. Through this struggle of the underclass and the oppressed, as Freire described them, or the proletariat as Gramsci named them, citizens find and define their place in the tapestry of society. Hirsch in *The Schools We Need* (1996) on the other hand, believes that the underprivileged should conform to the ruling class's ideals and modes of education so as to minimise difference and maintain the dominant culture. Hirsch does not want students to learn to use their voices to challenge the prevailing system; rather he wants a blanket education to be rolled out with minimal deviation from the core structure.

Nowadays, although difference can be seen in many facets of society, such as race, religion, ethnicity, class, and so on, a blanket education is the norm and this has been so since the industrial revolution. Introducing a more 'cultural'

education allows for those on the margins of society to participate in changing the prescribed social norm, and through this participation they learn to engage in politics and become agents of change and active citizens.

Although neither Gramsci, nor Freire has offered instantaneous answers to the challenges and trials that face educators today, their research has laid the foundations for further investigation to be undertaken. Gramsci describes education in terms of struggles, while Freire calls us to use education to identify problems in society that need to be solved; what is important here irrespective of the term used is that education is a tool that teaches self-awareness, self-discipline, and skills for self-administration. The language of Freire and Gramsci echoes each other, both speak of a classroom engaging in dialogue, allowing for a language of hope and struggle and opportunity. What is being argued and conceptualised is the recognition that educators need to nurture critical-consciousness and allow for new perceptions to be formed and confronted as a means to liberate the oppressed and promote a return to the primary definition of education as a means to participate in democratic practices. It also represents a move away from corporate-focused curricula that fail to inspire critical thinking. For Gramsci, the task for educators is to 'bridge the gap between criticism and politics, theory and action, and traditional education institutions and everyday life' (Giroux, 1999 p.18).

## Summary

Both Sommer and Freire maintain that the constituents of society need to become critically aware and use this new-found awareness to advance our understanding and knowledge of the world.

This section has dealt with discussing the theories which informed the contextual framework for this research. Reference was made to established theories in the field of cultural agency and with explicit reference to the U.S. scholar, Doris Sommer, the Brazilian pedagogue, Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci. Their theories relating to the connection between the style of education and the likelihood of civic participation were highlighted.

# Chapter 3 Methodology

## Introduction

This chapter details the specifics of the overall methodological approach of the study. The methodological framework and the approaches chosen in qualitative analysis are discussed and explained. The selection of case studies and the methodology applied will be deliberated upon and the data collection process will be highlighted; in addition the transcription of the interview will be discussed. The aim of this chapter is to highlight and discuss the methodological approaches employed and to defend their application.

## 3.1 Research Question

The main research question that motivates this study is how do the Arts and innovative politics assist in the promotion of civic participation?

## 3.2 Research Methodological Framework

A qualitative research framework has been chosen. Creswell defines this as:

> [A]n inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The research builds a complex, holistic pictures, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.
>
> (Creswell, 1998, p.15)

Creswell affirms that investigators must have a persuasive justification for selecting a qualitative research framework. In this study, the nature of the research question, the level of exploration done on the issue thus far, and the

objectives of the investigation support the use of a qualitative research framework.

As the research is a complex analysis of two cases displaying innovative approaches to education, a qualitative methodological approach has been selected in the form of case research. The rationale for the chosen case studies will be clarified in section 4.6 of this chapter. Interviewing and data collections will be mentioned in section 4.7. In section 4.8 and its subsections the analysis of the collected data is referred to. Reflections and limitations of the chosen methodological approach will be discussed in sections 4.9 and 4.10, respectively.

## 3.3 Nature of Qualitative Research Questions

Qualitative research is concerned with providing an understanding of social behaviour; in order for this to be possible, an exploration of people's interpretations of their social reality needs to be considered. The objective of the research question is to inquire about and understand the underlying factors and circumstances of the social phenomenon being explored, the description, analysis and the reasons for the situation. This form of research is especially appropriate for this particular study as not a lot is known about cultural agency and how it allows for certain interpretations to manifest which would not be possible with a quantitative approach.

## 3.4 Thematic Analysis as a Key Methodology for this Study

Thematic Analysis is commonly used in qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In general, Thematic analysis is an instrument used to classify, investigate and report thematic patterns within collected files and according to Braun and Clarke, 'there is no clear agreement about what thematic analysis is and how you go about doing it' (2006, p.79). In fact, many approaches may be considered as thematic analyses and can be associated with a variety of theoretical structures. Braun and Clarke state:

> Thematic analysis can be an essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, or it can be a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society.
>
> (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.81)

It is important to find a recurring theme in collected data and highlight some degree of meaning within the collected data. The advantages of thematic analysis are its flexibility and its approachability. Thematic analysis is rather straightforward and does not require a lot of experience in qualitative research in order to gain useful summaries and descriptions of the social reality being investigated.

This methodology allows a greater depth of analysis and so thematic analysis is a particularly well-suited method for the data analysis in the current research. Thematic analysis has permitted the identification and explanation of disabling factors and enablers concerning how the Arts and innovative approaches assist in the promotion of civic participation.

## 3.5 Case Study Research

Bhattacherjee states:

> The case research method is particularly appropriate for exploratory studies for discovering relevant constructs in areas where theory building is at the formative stages, for studies where the experiences of participants and context of actions are critical, and for studies aimed at understanding complex, temporal processes (why and how of a phenomenon) rather than factors or causes (what).
>
> (Bhattacherjee 2012, p.94)

As the principal research question is an exploration of how the Arts and innovative political approaches (as stated in section 4.1) can promote active citizenship, it has been deemed most appropriate that this style of interpretive research be applied, as 'more positivist methods[12] are used exclusively for theory testing' (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p.93). For the purpose of this research, 'innovative politics' is used to describe non-traditional methods and practices that promote active civic participation; this definition is aligned with Rancière's (2006) definition. The emerging theory can be found in case research as it is open to interpretation and theory emerges from the collection of data, which is in contrast to positivist research which 'can be used for theory testing only' (ibid.). One of the advantages of case research is that case research can 'help derive richer, more contextualized, and more authentic interpretation of the phenomenon of interest than most other research methods by virtue of its ability to capture a rich array of contextual data' (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p.93).

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[12] In positivist scientific research, the researcher is concerned with gaining knowledge in a world which is objective using scientific methods of enquiry. Methods associated with this paradigm include experiments and surveys where quantitative data is the norm.
http://ro.uwe.ac.uk/RenderPages/RenderLearningObject.aspx?Context=7&Area=1&Room=3&Constellation=24&LearningObject=104

## 3.6 Selection of Case Studies

Yin states that by definition a case study is a 'remarkable' event (2012, p.4). In this research two unique cases were selected for comparison and analysis: one that has its origins in Bogotá, Colombia, and the other in Dublin, Ireland. The criteria for the selection of these cases was based on the extent to which

- the Arts are used to identify and address local social issues

- how novel and non-traditional approaches were applied to the unique problems in order to solve the local problems at a local/personal level

- a promotion of critical thinking was encouraged

Case study is a method that incorporates a particular set of criteria necessary to undertake a robust analysis of a case or real-world context. The nature of case study research is to gain an in-depth and insightful understanding of a number of situations or cases, which will hopefully lead to new knowledge about 'real-world behavior and its meaning' (Yin, 2012, p.4). As the research question is one that attempts to explain why or how cultural agency assists in the promotion of civic participation, it is judged that case study research is applicable and appropriate. Yin defines case study research as:

> An empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g., "case"), set within its real-world context – especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.
>
> (Yin, 2012, p.4)

At times case study research can be seen to be unreliable and lacking credibility due to the research process. The neutrality of the research can also come into question. However if done correctly and systematically, case study research can

challenge these misconceptions and through analytical observations new insights can be found.

Because case study is not limited to the use of specific sources to generate data, this was also a contributing factor in the selection process. In both cases a mixture of sources were used to analyse the social phenomenon: documentary films, newspaper articles and an interview. Interviews will be discussed in the following section and also how the data was collected from the other sources.

## 3.7 Interviewing and Data Collection

Arksey and Knight (1999) assert that interviews provide data on understandings, opinions, what people remember doing, attitudes, feelings that people have in common, as such interviews in social science are subjective and open to different interpretations depending on the researcher. However it is a common belief that as citizens we share similar ideas, common experiences and interpretations of socio-cultural issues (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Moreover people also bring personal experiences, and this also needs to be taken into account. 'Qualitative approaches concentrate on understanding the thinking and behaviours of individuals and groups in specific situations' (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.10). The current study is cognisant of inherent subjectivity issues in the interviewing process.

A semi-structured and open-ended interview was conducted using a key figure from the Irish case study in order to generate data for analysis. Regarding the case study in Colombia, it was not feasible to conduct interviews. Semi-

structured interviews are naturalistic and encourage flexibility on the part of the researcher. The informants speak freely and spontaneously on the issue being discussed. As such the interviewer takes on a more 'passive, less directive role' (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.7).

A more informal approach is preferred in semi-structured interviews to allow for more qualitative data to be generated and allow the participants to feel at ease. A specific agenda was laid out by the researcher for the interview proceedings and the relevant topics and issues were carefully selected prior to interview. The interview questions can be found in Appendix B. The transcription of the interview can be found in Appendix C.

The objective of interviewing is 'to find out what is in one person's mind... to access the perspective of the person being interviewed..., to find out from them things that cannot be directly observed' (Patton, 1990, p.278). Bridget Byrne suggests that:

> Qualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individuals' attitudes and values – things that cannot necessarily be observed or accommodated in a formal questionnaire. Open-ended and flexible questions are likely to get a more considered response than closed questions and therefore provide better access to interviewees' views, interpretation of events, understandings, experiences and opinions … [qualitative interviewing] when done well is able to achieve a level of depth and complexity that is not available to other, particularly survey-based, approaches.
>
> (2004, p.182)

## 3.8 Data Analysis

Denscombe (2010) suggests that the purpose of analysing data lies in the underlying objectives of the research and the type of approach applied in order to generate data for analysis. The purpose of the analysis in research is to 'reveal underlying rules and structure of talk and interaction' (p.280). The significance of the data adds meaning to the social situation being studied and the recorded conversation has been divided into units for block analysis. The treatment of the data has been deconstructed as proposed by Denscombe, in order to display underlying rules. The analysis of case study research can be troublesome as there is no one prescribed way to do it. Yin suggests that 'some key assumptions' are made during the definition stage of the case study; motives for doing the research is one possible example (Yin, 2012, p.16).

### 3.8.1 Transcription of Verbal Data

The process of transcribing interviews can be an excellent way to become familiar with the data according to Riessman (1993); however it can also be 'fatiguing and can be stressful' (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.143). Silverman goes further in his critique of transcription when he says, 'it takes a long time to find two segments of tape that are several minutes apart' (2006, p.205). Also in natural conversations that are later transcribed it can be difficult to be totally true to the data when putting it to paper, as tone and stress cannot be transcribed, nor can attitude or body language, for example.

Bird advocates that transcribing verbal data should be regarded as 'a key phase of data analysis within interpretive qualitative methodology (2005, p.227).

Another advantage of transcribing verbal data is that one can 'inspect sequences of utterances without being limited to extracts' (Silverman, 2006, p.205).

I have to the best of my ability transcribed the essential information and utterances for detailed analysis, tidying certain phrases like muttering and inaudible sounds and overlapping, whilst aiming to be true to the message of the conversation. Some sensitive information, which was not televised and was only discussed during the interview, regarding personal issues and circumstances of the people involved has been removed from the transcript.

### 3.8.2 Searching for Common Themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) offer five key stages/phases for thematic analysis:

i. Becoming familiar with the data: Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down preliminary ideas.

ii. Creating initial codes: Coding interesting features of the data in a methodical manner across the complete data set, ordering of data related to each code.

iii. Probing for themes: Organizing codes into likely themes, collecting all data relevant to each possible theme.

iv. Revising themes: Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded excerpts (Phase 1) and the entire data set (Phase 2), generating a thematic map of the analysis.

v. Defining and identifying themes: Continuing examination to refine the details of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, producing clear descriptions and names for each theme.

### 3.8.3 Presenting Data

I present the data derived from the interview with John Lonergan and make reference to the Bogotá case in Chapter 6. The data is presented in two distinct categories: Facilitating factors (section 6.3) and obstructing factors (section 6.4).

In presenting these sections I have provided detailed descriptions of the narrative so as to give deeper understanding to the complexity of the chosen case studies.

## 3.9 Reflections upon this Research

In the previous section my research methods and processes were outlined and I believe that it is fundamental to reflect now on my role as a researcher in this process. Denscombe (2010) refers to reflexivity as inherent to how investigators interpret the social sphere, the meaning they give to occasions and circumstances that are formed by their understanding as social beings. Riessman (1993) suggests that the creation of any research is always influenced by the person who has produced it. I have to the best of my ability tried to remain neutral in my interpretations and only report the facts.

It is said that reflexivity is crucial in case research and that those that participate in it share a privileged comprehension of the inner workings of the particular cases, this is seen to be true in both the Mockus and Lonergan cases as both came to their prospective case study with ample experience in the field.

This should be considered as 'a genuine bonus for the research' (Denscombe, 2010, p.132).

Bryman talks about the importance of reflexivity and suggests that 'researchers should be reflective about the implications of their methods, values, biases and decisions for the knowledge of the social world they generate' (2001, p.471).

## 3.10 Limitations of Methodological Approach

There are certain limitations to consider in the qualitative methodological approach. The use of interviews depends on the full participation and honesty of those involved. I have no reason to think that the interviewee was not fully honest while being questioned, but I cannot say with certainty that his self-perception did not influence his responses. Qualitative research and data collection are all subjective and interpretive, what one researcher interprets can be different to another's interpretation and lead to different findings and results. In essence this style of research can lead to drawing different conclusions depending on who interprets them. However this is the nature of interpretive inquiry according to Miles and Huberman (1994). Bearing in mind – as already mentioned – my own personal experience and point of view could alter my interpretation of the collected accounts, I myself tried to remain objective while interpreting the data.

A further limitation of this research concerns its analysis of an isolated experience of the use of the Arts to promote active civic participation in an out-of-school programme for disadvantaged young people in the Dublin area and in

the campaign of a mayor in the Colombian capital. The Irish project was run over a ten-week period; as such it is only a snapshot in time of the studied social project. Had the project itself run for a longer period of time, the results and opinions of the interviewee might have differed, giving diverging results. The project's effects may have been greater or generated more empirical data to be analysed if the length of the project had been increased.

The same can be said for the Colombian case, as the time span was also limited. However there are numerous differences between the two cases; country, age, culture, social groups, and different decades. Differences notwithstanding, the aim of the study is not to compare the studies longitudinally, but to compare their focus and application of the use of Arts in the public sphere; at this level the cases are comparable regardless of the limitations.

## Summary

This chapter has focused on the methodological approach applied to answer the research question. At each stage the decisions and rationale behind the methodology have been explored and justified with reference to related literature. At the beginning of the chapter the reasons for choosing a qualitative research framework and different possible approaches of qualitative analysis were taken into consideration. The use of case studies allowed for research in action to be studied and through the use of interviewing in the Irish case study, a rich source of findings was generated. The aim of using this style of research is to identify the role the Arts play in promoting active reflection in the minds

of the people so that they learn to connect their situation to democracy and overall participation in society as a whole. The research findings that were generated will be presented and discussed in chapter 6: Research Findings. The following chapter discusses the links between different approaches to education, cultural agency and citizenship.

# Chapter 4 Cultural Agency

## Introduction

This chapter discusses the idea that specific styles of education, cultural agency and citizenship are all interlinked and connected, and when the three all work together this is when new ideas and practices emerge and allow society to push forward further in the pursuit of development. It focuses on cultural agency and the importance of the Arts in civic and social aspects. It links the Arts with education and active civic participation. Using Freire's concept of the "Banking Approach to Education" and analysing the social scenarios that are generated from this style of education, this chapter advocates the value the Arts have as a pedagogical tool. Two practical examples of the use of the Arts to promote active participation are highlighted, and the idea of education for cultural and creative freedom is discussed.

## 4.1 Art as a Valuable Pedagogical Tool

So why is there a need for Art in society? What value does it hold? There has never been a society where Art, in its varying forms, from poetry to music to literature, has not existed. Art allows the individual to express himself/herself in a way that he/she can project his/her image and imitation onto the world. A place is created where one's contribution can be appreciated, questioned, denied, argued and in doing this his world changes. When discussing Art's value here, I do not refer to a monetary value, but to an intangible worth with a higher

value than fluid currency. However, art can indeed lead to economic prosperity, but for the purpose of this study I am not concerned with the generation of fiscal currency. Essentially, Art fashions a creative space for humans to manifest their perception of the world and participate in a constructive way. Art can function in a manner that allows the creator to acknowledge his place in society and as such become aware of the possible social, political, religious constraints in which one finds oneself. But does Art serve a purpose in our lives, is it seen to hold solely a contentment role? Or can Art be used as a vehicle for transformation and progression? Doris Sommer would argue that Art plays a fundamental role in our development. For Sommer, Art plays a fundamental role in our development as children, adults, citizens, and members of society.

## 4.2 Freire's Concept of The Banking Approach to Education

The aspect of Freire's work that will be focused on here is his idea of the Banking Approach to Education.

Freire offers us an alternative model for education, one that differs from the traditional model of depositing pockets of knowledge and information to the individual in a one-way transaction that never allows for a relationship between the educator and the student. The idea of schooling and education has not changed much in Ireland since its inception; however the needs and requirements of its participants have changed immensely. The teaching in the

case of the Irish education system has never consisted of a dialogical approach; it was not, and is not constructed in that manner.

If we can the example of the Irish language curriculum in English-language schooling in the Republic of Ireland, the concept of 'banking education' becomes very apparent in this particular isolated context. The curriculum is so weighed down with poetry and literature that it leaves no room for interaction or conversation or indeed questioning of the literature and poetry itself. Students are required to memorise pieces of information for an exam that has not prepared them to converse in the language itself, merely to answer from memorisation, predetermined questions set out for them by the instructor, who has come through the same education system and has been conditioned to teach the subject in such a manner. In many cases, at no point is there an opportunity to step away from the prescribed instructions to allow for natural conversation and interaction to take place, between students themselves or between the teacher and the students. If we take this concept of 'banking education', these same ideals were common in both cases before the agents of culture (Mockus and Lonergan) began their work. They chose not to follow this ideology and instead opted for a more interactive learning model.

Questions and conversations were encouraged and indeed expected in both the Colombian and the Irish case studies discussed here. The experiences as a whole were a lot more beneficial and satisfactory for both the educator and those involved. For this reason I think that Freire's view that education needs to be

based on mutual respect and aimed at the students' need rather than students being consumers of knowledge is one that is extremely valid today.

## 4.3 Social Analysis

I have discussed in the methodology chapter my rationale for choosing John Lonergan and his project as it offered an alternate and complementary form of education. The objectives outlined in this project satisfy the criteria for a case study with cultural agency being used to promote a shift in 'traditional' practices among a group of adolescents who no longer take part in 'traditional' education. By this I mean that the young adults have found that the normal educational structures do not satisfy their needs and as such require an alternative model of education. A less stringent way to become educated allows them to become aware of their own unique position and unlocked value in society. A more flexible framework of classroom tries to teach them the skills they need to become successful in their chosen path in life; more practical skills, such as problem solving and teamwork, and training are given at YOUTHREACH Centres[13] around the country.

A group of this subsection of the community has been the topic of recent discussion, analysis and its own four-part TV documentary series. The agent of change comes in the person of John Lonergan, former governor of Mountjoy Prison in Dublin. His argument is that intervening early on can break the

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[13] YOUTHREACH Centres are Ireland's education and training programme for early-school-leavers. YOUTHREACH is an integral part of the national programme of second-chance education and training. The programme is directed at unemployed young early school leavers aged 15-20.
http://www.youthreach.ie/aatopmenu/AboutYR/about.html

detrimental cycle these young people have been brought up in. His method of education in this instance is circus training with The Belfast Community Circus. This gives the early school-leavers the opportunity to learn transferable social and civic skills.

The themes that take focus in the alternative education of troubled adolescents from underprivileged areas in Dublin range from socioeconomic factors, a family culture of intergenerational drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment and crime. How can an opportunity to train with a circus act as a tool to teach the participants lessons in values and life lessons that they cannot learn in a classroom setting?

It is not that these life lessons cannot be acquired in a school setting, but there remains in society a considerable percentage of underprivileged citizens for whom the stagnant system of anti-dialogical education does not meet their outlook or necessities. By introducing a dynamic element into the mix, the pupils' attention is immediately captured and the novelty of the project allows this interest to develop to a point where the subjects can see their progress through a final feature performance. The feature performance on St. Patrick's Day (2013) required a lot of training, and also endurance on the part of the adolescents is necessary; as well as circus training, they also learn about self-discipline, focus, perseverance and communication skills.

The circus training allows the 'should-be' school-goers to learn about the importance of determination and collaboration and instills a sense of community spirit. The aim is not unlike Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed,* in that

the theatre/circus acts as a place to change and modify reality and apply the changes to a civic context[14]. It should be noted that the circus training did not take over from classroom lessons, it merely supplemented and provided an additional outlet for students to learn new skills outside a traditional classroom environment.)

Art is a vehicle for such agency as it seeks to overhaul unproductive repetition. Its aim is to explore new ways of looking at and understanding the familiar. Art can interrupt the old, repetitive view and allow for alternative viewpoints of well-established injustices, in a novel way. When the paradigm cannot be shifted, it is the responsibility of the artist, cultural agent, and society to shift the perspective and allow for new interpretations to grow and prosper. Both Archer and Freire fail to give adequate definitions of culture and agency, stating that concepts and notions need to be confronted and adapted along the way and different criteria applied according to the situation. This in itself has led to a definition in cultural agency as 'problematic' as it comes in different forms and with different objectives and ultimately changes and transforms depending on perceptions and creativity of those involved in using it as a pedagogical tool for social change.

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[14] The results of this experiment have shown how many of the students who participated have decided to stay in education and have become more proactive in their local communities. On reflection, the adolescents said that they had learned a lot from the experience and that it had taught them valuable lessons that they would not have learned had they been taught in a one-dimensional classroom setting (Lonergan, 2013).

## 4.4 The responsibility of Art

During her time at Harvard and through her various cultural portals Sommer has questioned her own contribution to the world. She has realised that through training and engaging in the Arts and Humanities, Art's place in society surfaces in ways that break the boundaries of the classroom and construct tangible teaching opportunities in the public space. She takes her theory from Kant and his argument that individuals need to learn 'to exercise judgement' {27 Sommer, Doris 2006;}. Aesthetic training was Schiller's method for teaching judgement to those in the society of the time of the French Revolution; those in society who did not need to use this skill due to previous centuries of authoritarianism. Sommer argues that Kant's idea of everyday knowledge and the experience of everyman come from aesthetics and that it is a base for the public sphere.

## 4.5 How can Cultural Agency lead to the promotion of active citizenship?

Cultural agency is about teaching students to enjoy the unfamiliar. Through art they learn to interpret their world, the problems, social issues and so on, and learn to use art as a tool to remedy these problems. In the following sections two examples of cultural agency will be discussed so as to show practical applications and new interpretations of how to promote active citizenship. The first case in point is Colombian and the second is Irish.

### 4.5.1 Antanas Mockus: The *Bogotán* 'Classroom'

Mockus began his career in a university setting where he became a philosopher and mathematician and eventually Rector at the National University of Colombia. His background is significant in that it allows him to bridge different schools of ideas and apply them to social settings. His political career began by what could be described as chance. While addressing an auditorium of unruly university students, Mockus tried to gain control of the crowd, by mooning them to shocked silence. He later explained his action by saying "Innovative behaviour can be useful when you run out of words", and linked it to philosopher Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic violence" (1991, p.51).[15] During his term as mayor of Bogotá his inspiring honesty and his downright refusal to partake in traditional politics earned him the trust of many Colombians who had tired of the old corrupt ways and strove for a new beginning in Colombian politics. They saw Mockus as the man who could make this political renaissance a reality. In his time as mayor of the Colombian capital he came to receive a lot of media attention for his unconventional approaches to civic life and his innovative interpretation of politics.

Mockus, the mathematician, analytically considers his environment and actively participates in the positive promotion of education as a tool to renovate society. One such example of this is the educational symbolism of the pencil in his campaigns. Symbolism is a key aspect of his campaigns; these icons represent

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[15] Bourdieu pioneered investigative frameworks and terminologies such as cultural, social, and symbolic capital, and the concepts of habitus, field or location, and symbolic violence to reveal the dynamics of power relations in social life. His work emphasized the role of practice and embodiment in social dynamics, often in dialogue and opposition to universalizing Western philosophical traditions.

the significance of his movement. This was obvious during his time as Mayor in the country's capital, where he distributed thousands of laminated cards, one side depicting a thumb up and the reverse depicting a thumb down. These soccer-style cards were highly successful in allowing Bogotáns to play a major role in the governing of their run-down metropolis. By giving the citizens the power to engage in a dialogue with each other and promoting them to interact with each other in a productive manner, how their negative behaviour affects their fellow citizens, this idea of creative practice to bring about social involvement permitted Mockus to inspire a whole city to engage critically in their lives and take positive steps towards a better future. Like Gramsci before him, Mockus would not wait for change to happen itself; instead he endorsed a "passive revolution" through the power of culture (Sommer, 2006). Using cultural agency as the weapon of choice he was able to combat social conditions to totally change the manner in which politics were conducted in Bogotá and this in turn led to economic growth. This social experiment proved to all involved and to the outside world that there is always an alternative way to conduct the 'cultures of politics, and the politics of cultures' [16]. It is this type of non-conventional thinking that allowed the citizens of Bogotá to participate in the governing of their city and to cultivate the minds of fellow Colombians.

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16 "Cultures of Politics/Politics Of Cultures: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements" by Sonia E. Alvarez, Dagnino, E. and Escobar, A. 1998.

## 4.5.2 A lesson in Civic Participation

At the essence of civic participation there is cultural agency. Bogotá was once known as the world's worst city and in 1994 was on the CIA's list of one of the world's most dangerous cities. It was here that a cultural metamorphosis began and the city experienced a massive change in the way people interacted with their city and in their attitudes towards each other, the authorities and the city itself. The culture of politics and the politics of culture were beginning to be redefined. Mockus was elected as an independent candidate, the first in Colombian history. As he was independent, he owed no political favours and so was free to assemble his cabinet as he wished. He chose his ministers for their skills and expertise alone. The mayor's office was staffed by academics. One of Mockus' beliefs was that dialogue is the way forward; a conviction in line with that of Paulo Freire. His background in philosophy led him to use the city as 'an experiment in political theory' (Daalsgard, 2009). He pushed for a change in collective perspective and urged the people to open their minds to changing public behaviour. He had an advantage as a non-politician in the mayor's office as professors were seen to be more trustworthy than politicians. He questioned and challenged people's morality. This is where civic participation enters. The public was asked to criticise and reflect on their and the behaviour of fellow city-dwellers in order to highlight unproductive social habits and in order to bring about change.

It is important here to state the ideological disciplines that were applied to the Bogotá situation. Mockus, being an expert in philosophy and mathematics,

decided to lead the lesson of civic participation by his own example. This method saw Mockus play the part of cultural agent and this allowed him to inject theatrics and fun into politics. Sommer would agree with his chosen method and the aesthetics of his campaign. These aesthetics were used to educate on acceptable social behaviour. Before Mockus, a culture of ignorance existed among the people; although they knew littering and jay walking were wrong, the culture of ignorance led to this being socially tolerated. Mockus' aim was to re-train their way of thinking. His regeneration of people's attitude towards civic responsibility led to citizens being more informed about issues that affected them directly.

One of the ways he promoted civic involvement was evident when he hired 420 mime artists to direct traffic. This act illustrates his talent at combining entertainment with civic norms to allow the public to see the old mundane daily practices with refreshed eyes. Art (in the form of mime) provided an alternate viewpoint to assess the issue of traffic violation. It allowed new perceptions to flourish amongst the inhabitants of Bogotá and injected a sense of aesthetic pleasure in the process. What Mockus managed to do was to nurture a culture of reciprocal respect between the mimes' role in education and the slow process of understanding on the part of inhabitants. Citizens were asked to monitor the behaviour of fellow citizens and if they saw something illegal or someone acting in a dangerous way they were given the means to voice their concerns instantaneously by showing a red card. Although Bogotáns did not quite understand Mockus' vision, they knew he was "onto something". Their

experience of this transitional period of new traffic directors was something they found enjoyable and novel, thus overall they were more willing to accept it. One way to consider Mockus' mime artists is as a kind of civil institution deftly enforcing standards of behaviour.

> To shame jaywalkers and discourage pickpockets, he sent mimes into the streets to walk behind them and mimic their actions. He gave motorists a new weapon for venting aggression: cards with a thumbs-down sign that they could hold up, like soccer referees, to signal that another driver had committed a foul. There were also cards with a thumbs-up sign to flash at particularly civil motorists.
>
> (Tierney, 1998)

**Figure 4.1 Soccer-Style Card**
**(Source: Google Generated Search)**
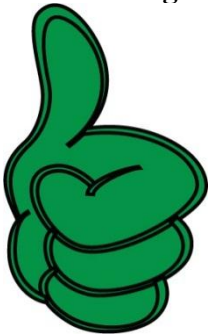
**Figure 4.2 Mime artists directing traffic**
**(Source: Sommer 2006, Cover Photo)**





There were some who objected to his policies; the police commission itself tried to stop the programme, but Mockus was adamant. Moreover, as mayor he refused to participate in the corruption of the city. His loyalty lay only with the citizens; he himself was a tax-payer and had grown tired of the corruption at every level of Colombian society.

In all of his policies and campaigns education was central. At that time, Bogotá witnessed dozens of deaths every weekend due to traffic related accidents and

stolen vehicles. Mockus refused to attend council meetings on stolen cars until people acknowledged the value of life. He introduced his *"La Vida es Sagrada"* campaign and through this campaign traffic-related deaths dropped by 30%. The mind-set of the people shifted and people began to appreciate the importance of controls, life becomes sacred again. In his term as mayor, the city's violence dropped and the wealthier citizens were encouraged to donate an extra 10% of their income to help with the renovation of their city; they donated and this act of civic participation for the greater good affirmed people's belief in community spirit and collective identity. The citizens soon realised that the more respect they showed for their municipality, the more attractive it became to investors.

By the end of Mockus' first term, he had cultivated a consciousness in his citizens, equipping them with tools to better themselves and their surroundings. This idea of consciousness is directly related to the ideas of Freire and it is this unlocking of the mind to open up a dialogue of inquisition that led Bogotá to shift its perspective and open up new avenues of opportunities.

What is interesting here is that the next mayor to take seat in city hall was also an independent and he continued to a certain extent, the ideals of Mockus, tying and incorporating them with his own goals and visions. Mockus had transformed the psyche of the city; Enrique Peñalosa's task was to transform the city's physique. He proposed "equality through urban design". The make-up of the cabinet of Peñalosa sees the academics replaced by the boardroom.

Peñalosa tackled the ineffective transport system with the *Transmilenio* project. But in order for the project to be successful, a major slum in the centre of the capital needed to be demolished. There were protests from those living in the slum, saying that a lack of dialogue about the project and too short notice to evacuate the area left them in a worse situation than they were already in. The project advanced and Bogotá became one large construction site. Old derelict neighbourhoods were torn down and renovated, new green spaces were installed. Libraries were opened to promote education and emphasise the importance of literacy skills.

Enrique Peñalosa was the force behind the design of the city. It was his belief that the design of a city has an impact on the justice, quality and happiness of the citizens. Peñalosa brought city planning and a team of doers to the mayor's office at a time when the misconduct and bribing of public officials was at its highest. Through his policies, he was able to provide the city with a modern bus system that significantly enhanced citizen mobility in their city. Mockus had facilitated an attitudinal shift which allowed the public to be receptive in being taught how to be citizens and Peñalosa built on Mockus' practices and ideology and provided them with a functional city.

Both men served as mayor for two terms in city hall, Mockus from 1995 to 1997 succeeded by Peñalosa from 1998 to 2000 and then Mockus again in 2001 to 2003. What makes this period in Colombian history interesting is that both these mayors prioritised social coexistence ahead of economic gain. The generation of finance and investment came after the city's investment in its people and the

development of civic awareness. With the awakening of civic consciousness came a more socially and legally aware populace. Mockus affirms that "ethics come before legality". Recourse to law should be the final option. How did this shift in urban governance lead to a transformation in the minds of the citizens? How did the teachings on respect for life and the importance of water conservation lead to a more prosperous place? A more fitting question may be how can this be measured? How does civic participation lead to education and transformation?

Mockus' and Peñalosa's teams worked on tackling reforms through the cooperation of different agencies, offices and the implementation of new ideas. They opened up the doors of city hall to allow dialogue and invited the citizens to participate in the governing of their city. The freedom of not having political affiliation allowed them to choose the best-qualified professionals and this led to a more efficient running structure. It should be noted that both approaches share similarities and yet were very different in their application. The success of both mayorships was due to the measured approach of experts who put the well-being of the fellow Bogotáns ahead of monetary considerations. The city lived through a cultural, physical and political transformation, in relation to the quality of life and how the inhabitants interacted with each other and the city itself. This transformation can be used as a model for other cities on how to improve on civility, urban governance, and how to apply theoretical ideas to practical situations. Three main pillars inform in the approach: citizens before

profit, using education to promote a culture of respect for life, and the overhauling of corrupt practices.

Through innovative practices, functioning transport development and well-researched cultural programmes shared over a three-term period in the mayor's office, Bogotá managed to turn itself and its inhabitants into a model of possibility for barely functioning, corrupt and culturally stationary cities by approaching politics in a way that places people at its centre. Although Bogotá was not, nor is now close to being an urban utopia, it can provide other cities with a valuable lesson in the governance of a city that puts people first and encourages individual thinking for collective benefit.

### 4.5.3 Parallels between Antanas Mockus and John Lonergan's campaigns

Before discussing the Irish case study, I would like to outline the comparisons between the two cases. Parallels can be drawn between John Lonergan and Antanas Mockus, neither is a politician, yet they work in a politically-charged environment. The two share the belief that education is a tool for citizenship and something that should be utilised to tackle social problems.

Lonergan's experience comes from the forty years he spent as a prison guard, twenty of those as the highest ranking prison officer in Ireland; the Governor of Mountjoy Prison. He believes that the absence of education is one of the main reasons that people turn to crime. His ideology is that 'blanket education' does not and cannot work for everyone in society. As such, an alternative form of

education should be made available to those who find that traditional educational institutions do not serve their needs.

This area of education is multi-faceted and complex and as such I have chosen to focus on the education of the socially disadvantaged, as a clearer comparison may be made with the example in Bogotá.

Although the starting point in Bogotá differentiates from the Irish example I have chosen, the objectives of the cultural agents share similarities. Both Mockus' and Lonergan's aims are to inject new practices in their chosen subject: in the case of Mockus, Bogotá, in Lonergan's case, the ailing support for young people from disadvantaged areas in Dublin in the Irish education system. The Colombian case focuses just as much on education for the marginalised communities as the promotional tool for new practices in the city. Education was promoted in Bogotá as a tool in acquiring the skills to be a good citizen. *La Vida es Sagrada* campaign asked the participants to engage in the promotion of the new laws and encouraged a dialogue between all. Likewise, in the Irish example, the focus was on education, what was asked of those involved in Lonergan's project was that they engaged in a new kind of education, one that allowed them to participate in a system that benefited their needs and the needs of the community. Both examples promoted a form of civic education.

In both cases, a specific community was targeted, one which is not performing or adhering to the societal norms. In Bogotá, prior to the election of Antanas Mockus there was corruption and unruly social behaviour at every level of

society. Needless to say, that is not to suggest that once he was elected or after his term in City Hall that there was no longer injustice or laws being broken, but the significance in the fall of these occurrences is important. It is estimated that the rate of traffic-related crime fell between '50%' (Alexander and Stibbs, 2010).

Reasons for this 'underperformance' are identified through open discussions with groups and individuals involved and a strategy to correct these poor performing areas is put in place. Both Mockus and Lonergan act as what Sommer would describe as 'agents of change' (2006, p.337). They facilitate and guide a change in a community and inject the idea of citizenship and education with something novel to allow for new perceptions to come about with regards to rules and order, allowing the communities to participate positively in their interaction with their city, school and local government.

This method of asking those most affected by the change in circumstances to participate and facilitate the change leads to a more invested citizen. The dialogue-based approach proved successful in Bogotá, with an increase in public awareness, a boost in civic and social morale and a huge reduction in traffic-related deaths (50%) and tax evasion. Some '63,000 Bogotans agreed to pay an extra 10% tax' when Mockus convinced them that it was an investment in their city and the value of their property would increase if it was on a well-built road (Caballero, 2004).

### 4.5.4 John Lonergan's Circus

John Lonergan affirms that education or the absence of education can lead to criminality. This may seem a generalisation, but if different motivating features which lead to criminality such as lack of education, family circumstance and lack of access to cultural programmes, for example, are taken into account, it is clearly a valid statement. There are many layers in the societal problem of crime. The percentage of prisoners in Mountjoy who left school before taking their Leaving Certificate is a staggering 96% (O'Mahony, 2002). A lack of participation in education is seen as a major contributing factor in unsocial and unlawful behaviour. Lonergan is promoting preventative measures that cater for different learning needs; measures that can serve the interests of those from disadvantaged areas and steer them away from criminal activity. We know that the current mainstream Irish educational system, which can be described as sharing similarities to the run-down governing system in Bogotá in the 1990s, does not work for all involved; similarities such as a one-way system of instruction with very little input from the general population on matters affecting them. Another shared similarity is the lack of participation from those on the margins of either society in their own development. In Lonergan's case the prescribed system of education only 'works' for those who are brought up in a culture where education is seen as valuable and for those who have seen the benefits of participating in it. The current system when coupled with aesthetic education, be that sport, art or music, can engage a student/citizen, and from that connection people are more likely to remain in an educational environment,

especially when that engagement is encouraged and supported by the family unit. But traditionally what has happened in areas of socio-economic disadvantage is that there is no dominant group that has gone through the education system and reaped its rewards. In deprived socio-economic areas in Dublin some 9,000 students leave school early; the question is why? What can be done to help those whom the classroom does not excite or motivate?

The documentary series called *John Lonergan's Circus* maps a training programme targeted at assisting young people to learn valuable social, civic and interpersonal skills. The series was devised to help possible errant adolescents steer clear of the potential socially predetermined paths their lives would most likely take, if they dropped out of school. The programme's objectives were not focused on the academic side of learning, but on social education through the performing arts and the circus. Through involvement in the training, the students learned new life-affirming skills, such as teamwork, self-discipline, and perhaps more importantly it gave them self-confidence in their own creativity and self-esteem. The training took place in Belfast and was provided by the Belfast Community Circus which 'is recognised as a leader in the field of social circus, using circus as a tool for individual and community development with those at risk or disadvantaged'[17].

"The (Irish) education system focuses on teaching people to earn a living not how to live" (Lonergan, *John Lonergan's School Principles*, 2012). Too much emphasis is put on academic achievement; a more social education could engage

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[17] http://www.belfastcircus.org/news/archive

more people and perhaps entice them back into the classroom, or encourage them not to leave in the first place. Activities like sport, art, music are all possible ways to do this. Literary skills workshops allow students to come into contact with literature, and this contact can, in turn, allow the mind to open up to self-expression, and it can also harness critical analysis skills and self-awareness, as was the case with Sommer's initiatives in the US. The idea that through aesthetic pleasure, valuable life skills can be learned and that through self-enlightenment people can direct their learning in a way that serves their needs is a shared theory tested by both Freire and Sommer. If the emphasis is always placed on the academic achievement of the student, this can prove an obstacle to the learner's ability to develop to their full potential. Unfortunately another side of this problem is that there are also generational issues.  A lot of these students come from a home where education is not held in high regard, the parents themselves, in the majority of cases, were also early school-leavers and they may not feel that school is for everyone. Different approaches are needed for different types of learners. A further issue is that children who find sitting in a classroom difficult also feel alienated because perhaps they require more assistance from the educator, but it is not possible due to large class sizes. This lack of attention can lead to the child feeling neglected and the child may seek attention through other means, for example engaging in disruptive or socially unacceptable behaviour.

## 4.6 Education for cultural and creative freedom

Cultural and creative education needs to be implemented in the Irish school system, and should be given the same treatment and importance as maths and languages, because it facilitates the acquisition of skills needed in today's world. In his report to the British Secretary of State for Education and Employment and the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* (1999), Ken Robinson[18] summarised the origins of the current western education system quite precisely. He states that

> The foundations of the present education system were laid at the end of the nineteenth century. They were designed to meet the needs of a world that was being transformed by industrialisation. The challenges we face now are of the same magnitude, but they are of a different character. The task is not to do better now what we set out to do then: it is to rethink the purposes, methods and scale of education in our new circumstances.

(Robinson, 1999, p.16)

This statement can be applied to the context of Lonergan's project with disadvantaged young people. He argues for similar changes in the school curriculum; changes that meet the modern needs of students. The school needs to adapt to the need of society not the other way round. If the school is meant to be the place that provides the tools needed to live then it is noteworthy that the needs have changed dramatically since the inception of the current school system. The way in which people live now and the needs they have are not

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[18] Ken Robinson is a British education practitioner who has worked on education policy and the benefits of using the Arts in education He is the author of The White Paper, and advised the British National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education.

reflected in the education they are given. We no longer live in an age where the majority of people will finish school and begin manual work. The prerequisite for today's school-leavers to have technological and word-processing and communication skills is fundamental. Companies now need people able to think critically and abstractly in order to meet the demands of ever-changing modern work and these skills can be taught using the Arts and pedagogical styles that incorporate aesthetic learning.

## 4.7 Examples of cultural agency at work internationally

On the international stage many examples of cultural agency at work can be observed. One such example is a project called *Wasteland* by Vik Muniz. Muniz is a photographer and cultural agent. His subjects were those excluded from society; people from the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He chose the garbage pickers from the recycling plant *Jardim Gramacho*, one of the largest recycling plants in the world. In his project he photographs the waste pickers in poses from well-known artistic portraits and paintings using the recyclable garbage as the raw materials from which the portrait is constructed in larger than life size mosaics and photographed from above. The art was then auctioned off and the money generated is then put back into the community where new facilities such as a library are maintained and literacy classes are offered. His form of cultural agency allows the material the garbage pickers handle every day, material that is deemed useless by the middle and upper classes, to be transformed into tangible currency in the form of art.

Muniz uses classic art as a means to merge two worlds, that of the audience and the pickers, the artist and the muse, the unwanted and unattainable, in order to recycle these ideas and materials to give a new function. Muniz says he tries to bring dignity to the disgusting. Through the participation, the pickers unlock the subconscious and begin to look for a way out of *Jardim Gramacho*. They become aware of their oppression. As a resonating effect those involved in the project have since gone on to setting up businesses and entering politics. The participants of this social endeavour fully engaged in the project and through the process have become enlightened and aware of the avenues they can take in order to engage more fully as a citizen.

This example of cultural agency highlights the use of the Arts to bring about change in communities and social groups, while allowing those involved to become critically aware of their circumstances and provides outlets for them to strive to better their situation.

In Lima, Peru, Sarita Cartonera is an informal publishing house that uses recycled cardboard to make books. Unpublished literary material are donated by very distinguished artists as well as up-and-coming artists and visual artists help decorate book covers and then these individually decorated books are sold to generate income. This project links the people on the margins of society with the best artists and writers in their country to work together to shape their future, while promoting education, civic engagement and critical thinking.

Both these forms of cultural agency are a varied approach to creating venues for developing arts and arts interpretation as contributions to social development. Many other examples of cultural agency can be found around the world; most notable is that they are almost always located in areas of social and economic disadvantage. This is not surprising as it is those on the margins of society that often offer new perspectives and ways to approach social issues and concerns.

## Chapter Summary

At a time when more is expected of school-leavers, not only academically but socially, culturally and creatively, students need a more rounded style of education, one that equips them with a wide range of transferable, inter-disciplinary skills that allows them to navigate through their chosen career path; a pedagogy that promotes abstract thinking and creative questioning could be the answer.

Education, cultural agency and citizenship are all interlinked and connected, and when the three work together this is when new ideas and practices emerge which allow society to push forward in the pursuit of development. The 'regeneration' of people is far more challenging than the regeneration of infrastructure, as was shown in the Bogotá case. Inviting people to participate artistic activities that can be used as a platform for social change can link people to the changes taking place in their community and can afford them a say in the decision-making process which in turn can lead to a better mutual understanding of the

different and contrasting opinions. Once citizens are on board, and are receptive to change, the positive effect this can have is immeasurable.

When the changes serve the community (particularly underprivileged communities) and the community experiences the benefit of these changes, this is the focal point where education can give the socially deprived the opportunity to leave the cycle of unemployment and crime and it opens the doors to many possibilities that would not have been conceivable had education not served the community's and individual's needs. If current educational management and policy makers realise the connections between education and social shortcomings and aesthetic education, and steps are taken towards investment in alternative forms of education so that children do not leave school early, there is a huge potential for personal and social development that if nurtured in the right way could lead to those skills and talents being used for self-development, financial gain and for the benefit of the community. The key here is that change needs to work with and for the people and it has to come from the people. When those affected by the social shift feel they have contributed to the change, a shift in attitude can mean the success or the failure of a project. So why do children leave school early? Why did their parent and/or grandparents leave school early before them? The sheer lack of access to education results in inter-generational and long-term problems in disadvantaged areas.

This chapter has focused on cultural agency and the importance of the Arts in civic and social aspects. It has linked the Arts with education and active civic participation. It has discussed the idea that specific styles of education, cultural

agency and citizenship are all interlinked and connected; the idea that a more aesthetic and social education could foster a more critically aware and civically involved population. The next chapter focuses on research findings.

# Chapter 5 Research Findings

## Introduction

This chapter outlines the research findings of how the Arts and innovative approaches assist in the promotion of civic participation. The research findings are based on a broad array of data that was collected using a documentary on a social project undertaken in Ireland that promoted and facilitated a cultural change, and also drawing on a follow-up face-to-face interview that was conducted with one of the principal instigators of the social project. Lonergan believes that the absence of education is one of a number of the many possible reasons why people turn to crime. It is his belief that the traditional education does not and cannot work for everyone in society. As such, an alternative form of education with an added emphasis on the Arts in education should be made available to those who find the traditional educational institutions do not serve their needs. Using the educational system as a tool to teach skills other than academic skills, he feels would allow those who are not academically-minded to participate more fully in society and would aid in the formation of much-needed critical thinking and social skills. He is someone who is involved in promoting civic participation in the local community and who encourages the use of innovative ideas and the Arts in order to better engage young people in their personal education and individual development. In presenting the data I have opted to use detailed excerpts from our conversation[19] in order to highlight and contextualise the

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[19] Permission was obtained from Mr. John Lonergan to use excerpts from our interview in this research. The information shared through the research findings is in the public domain in the form of the TV documentary *John Lonergan's Circus.* Interview transcript which are quoted throughout this chapter can be found in Appendix C.

social changes in question; in-depth reference and scrutiny to the documentary series will also be offered in order to contextualise the research findings.

Through analysis several themes were identified. Gibbs states that 'the application of names to passages of text is not arbitrary, it involves a deliberate and thoughtful process of categorizing the content of the text' (2007, p.39). The interview was scrutinised in order to identify the recurring themes and to also gain a deeper understanding of the themes.

## 5.1.1 Practicality

The practical nature of case study research is to acquire an in-depth and astute understanding of a number of situations or cases, which will hopefully lead to new knowledge about 'real-world behavior and its meaning' (Yin, 2012, p.4). Mockus' experiment took this approach and attempted to put it into practice. He used the city of Bogotá as a city-wide classroom and aimed to teach its inhabitants practical ways to interact with their city in order to promote civic participation. His ideas were based on practical solutions to realistic issues affecting his constituents and his tackles these issues in an aesthetically pleasing manner in order to get the attention of those affecting most. Lonergan's approach fits this model also as the characteristics of the project deal with real-world issues and concerns: the participation in education of those from disadvantaged areas in Dublin using the Arts as an avenue to explore issues affecting them.

## 5.1.2 Sustainable Change

Both as a way of dealing with practical problems and as a means of discovering more about phenomena, change is regarded as an integral part of case research. Denscombe (2010) also suggests that change is a fundamental aim of the research project and as such it 'is regarded as a valuable enhancer of knowledge in its own right' (p.128) and it is deemed to be something that happens throughout the research process and not 'after the results have been obtained' (ibid.). The objective in both cases studied is "to create sustainable learning capacities and to give participants the option of increasing control over their own situation" (Greenwood and Levin, 1998 p.18). In the case of Mockus, as was discussed in the previous chapter, he was able to identify a practical way to engage the public and have them actively participate in changing the destructive and negative cultural practices such as crime and governmental corruption that had affected and denied progress to reshape and change the metropolis for the better. This change came in the form of a complete overhaul of city hall and the traffic police force; two very visible examples of law and order. By using these official posts as examples of the greater good and encouraging through the public to engage in a two-way dialogue, he promoted a culture of mutual recognition and social responsibility. Another change came in the way citizens engaged with each other. Before Mockus took position in the Mayor's office the city itself was a very unfriendly and chaotic place to be in, as stated in section 1.2.

Lonergan's aim was to induce a change of attitude towards education in his chosen group of adolescents. He became the enabler of change, with the circus project as the catalyst for this new awareness of the benefits of a change in attitude and the development of an awareness of the value of participating in cultural practices.

### 5.1.3 Cyclical process

Research involves a feedback loop in which initial findings generate possibilities for change which are then implemented and evaluated as a prelude to further investigation. In both cases feedback and critique were encouraged and welcomed. This is the cyclical nature of cultural agency, where initial conversations and attempts are discussed in a productive manner and the possibility of designing new approaches is allowed to be voiced by an involved group.

The essential parts to be considered in this cyclical process of enquiry are that the research directly feeds back into practice, and that the process is continuous. The enablers of cultural agency (Mockus and Lonergan) must critically reflect on the direction and identification of the 'problems' deemed suitable for analysis but specifically the ones that can lead to improvement.

### 5.1.4 Participation

In both cases, Bogotá and Dublin; participation and civic engagement were the fundamental principal aims and objectives of the projects and campaigns: to bring about a political and/or social change for those on the margins of society. The two cases are in effect cases of cultural agency in action. The common

thread in both is that participation is vital and forms an essential part of cultural agency.

The level of participation on the part of the Colombian mayors Peñalosa and Mockus, and in the Irish case, Lonergan, should be noted. As change facilitators they were invested in the processes from the very beginning. They were dedicated to bringing about positive societal changes and contributing to the promotion of the Arts in a more engaging way. In each situation each of them found a way to inject a sense of aesthetic pleasure into once perceived as mundane cultural practices. They managed to participate and help navigate the moral compass and awaken the inquisitive spirit of otherwise passive citizens. It was through this mutual participation and constant dialogue that each project was able to take effect on those involved. It involved commitment on the part of Lonergan, Mockus and Peñalosa but equally, and perhaps more, by those who were inspired to participate in becoming agents of change in their own communities and societies. From the data generated during the process of this study, examples of active civic participation and cultural agency came in many forms; these emergent themes will now be examined in further detail so as to ascertain the meaning and significance of the cultural manifestations. The use of the Arts and innovative policies will be examined and how these cultural manifestations brought about new ways of approaching time-old, mundane practices with new, refreshed tactics in order to best attain and promote engagement between disengaged citizens and cultural exercises.

In particular, the data that was collected during the interview process with the Irish example of cultural agency, Lonergan, will be the source of data from which most scrutiny will be undertaken, due to the accessibility of the data and in order to situate the data into a more concrete context. In each set of data, both the Colombian and the Irish one, common themes crossed both case studies and these similarities and differences will be compared and contrasted in the discussion so as to give more honest and well-rounded outcomes and provide for more fruitful discussions on the implications of introducing the Arts as a teaching tool to promote active civic participation in areas where there is a disconnect between citizens and civic responsibility.

## 5.2 Thematic Analysis of Interview Transcript

The data was studied and analysed thoroughly using thematic analysis and through this nine reoccurring themes or codes emerged. Gibbs (2007) states that 'coding is easier using a transcript' (p.40) and it is for this reason after the transcription of the audio of the interview a thematic analysis of the transcribed conversation was applied. It was deemed most suitable and efficient to analyse the transcript without machine assistance. Although some consider that using code software such as QSR NVivo is more effective and less time-consuming, this was not the case as a lot of difficulties were encountered early on in the coding process; examples of difficulties were an overlapping of codes which led to confusion and misinterpretations of the codes. As such, manual coding was selected for the purpose of reliability and also because manually analysing the

transcript allows the researcher to become more familiar with the data. As already stated in the methodology chapter (section 4.9), I have tried to remain neutral in my construction of the theming of the codes and refrained – in so far as possible - from allowing my own personal opinions and attitude from influencing the interpretation of the generated data.

This study has aimed to identify facilitators of and obstacles to civic participation among a selected group of young people from disadvantaged areas in Dublin who took part in a social programme involving circus training which culminated in a final performance.

First, four enabling factors and four obstacles were identified through a thematic analysis of the data. The enabling factors that emerged are: access to creative programmes, critical consciousness, dialogue and access to social outlets. The de-habilitating factors[20] identified are: unfavourable family circumstances, educational and health obstacles and disadvantages, lack of discipline and routine, lack of self-confidence and self–esteem, and underdeveloped social and interpersonal skills.

These facilitating and disabling factors were considered noteworthy based on the frequency of reference to them. The frequency of the factors can be seen in brackets in the following table.

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[20] De-habilitating factors are issues or factors that hinder participation in learning opportunities and prevent personal and social skills from developing.

| Table 5.1 Enabling Factors of and Obstacles to how do the Arts and innovative approaches assist in the promotion of civic participation | |
|---|---|
| **Enabling Factors** | **Obstacles** |
| • Critical Consciousness (12) <br><br> • Dialogue (9) <br><br> • Creativity (4) <br><br> • Access to Social Outlets (10) | • Unfavourable Family Circumstances (4) <br><br> • Educational and Health Obstacles and Disadvantages (12) <br><br> • Lack of Discipline and Routine (11) <br><br> • Lack of Self-confidence and self–esteem (8) <br><br> • Underdeveloped Social and Interpersonal skills (6) |

In the following sections these facilitators and obstacles will be discussed in further detail.

## 5.3 Factors that enable the Arts to aid in the promotion of civic participation

### 5.3.1 Critical Consciousness

Being critically conscious describes a mindset that has been encouraged to develop and question the pre-existing social structures, whether they are educational, social or political. The idea is that through critical consciousness a better understanding of democratic structures and their effects on the lives of those who participate in this process is acquired and a knowledge of how they use their voice to enhance their circumstances. This skill demands that people be critical of their education and aware of how it can affect and determine their place in society. Moreover it enables them to become active in their learning. This is a skill that has not been and is not a central aspect on the current school curriculum. Although Freire's main concern dealt with the illiteracy of society's marginalized, Freirean ideas can be seen in the extracts from the interview with Lonergan, some of these ideas would be also reflected in Mannheim's writings. Freire quotes Mannheim saying that

> 'Mannheim would not restrict his definition of ignorance to illiteracy, but would include the masses' lack of experience at participating and intervening in the historical process'.

(Freire 2010, p.37)

Parallels can be drawn from Freire's attempts at forming a theory and Lonergan's approach to cultural education, as in essence both subscribe to the need for a new form of education that awakens the consciousness and strives to

promote a critical 'reading' of the environment in which the disadvantaged find themselves.

Lonergan speaks in this extract of the need for this type of critical thinking training in formal education to allow for self-awareness and self-discipline to emerge:

> Lonergan: *I think it's all about trying to help the person become more aware. I mean, I'm a great believer myself that the right, you know the best and most difficult challenge and the biggest challenge often is to develop that sense of self-discipline into people, because a lot of the fellas I know, that's one of their things; their biggest weakness* (p.xxiv).

Lonergan here discusses the idea of self-discipline and how we as a society need to learn to become self-disciplined. Lonergan again is certain that the education system (the school) plays a role in developing this sense of discipline. From this standpoint, it can be deduced from this comment that Lonergan holds a firm belief that if our education system allowed for a more rounded development of the child there would be more of a balanced assessment of the learner - not only quantifiable skills, but skills like self-discipline. The acquisition of skills for those who find the academic side of school difficult means that they will at least be better equipped to recognise the difficulties and have a better opportunity to rectify and overcome the obstacles they face. If they are educated in becoming aware of the challenges they face in relation to school, life, and broader society and if they are taught how to verbalise these concerns there exists the possibility that those who are on the verge of dropping out of school altogether

will be better able to cope with the strains of school life and these coping skills may allow them to overcome difficulties outside the classroom also.

> Lonergan: *One [element] is around trying to develop the person to have more self-control, be more aware of their actions, to be more accountable for their own actions, because that's one of the things they don't ever take any notice of, of the consequences of what they do* (p.xxiii).

Ayers, Quinn and Stovall highlight the intentions of the schooling system and how these are institutions that should be used to form and shape the future citizens of the world on their potential influence on the world around them.

> Given that […] schools in any democracy are always intended to be agencies of civic mindedness and responsibility, and that the well-being of young people is the pretext for almost every political movement on the planet, these institutions should be used to encourage youth to recognize their power to act upon the world via critical awareness.

(Ayers, Quinn and Stovall, 2009, p.51)

The reality of the schooling system however is very different. Although it aims to educate and shape the young minds of the time, it can be seen to have a contrary, underlying effect. Freire exposed some of these discrepancies in the education system demonstrating how it is used as a tool for the elite classes to keep societies inequitable; Gibson (1999) describes it as a 'democratic egalitarian weapon' (p.130). As the subjects of this particular social project were disadvantaged themselves (from birth) due to economic and/or unfavourable family environments and also because nearly all of those involved in the programme had left mainstream education, the assessment by Freire holds some truth. This generation of school-goers like so many before them were not taught that

> …critical consciousness is an awareness of the necessity to constantly unveil appearances designed to protect injustice which serves as a foundation for action toward equality and democracy. For Freire, no form of education could be neutral. All pedagogy is a call to action.

<div align="right">(Gibson, 1999, p. 129)</div>

Lonergan shares his experience of the inmates in Mountjoy, the majority of whom come from socially disadvantaged areas, and their negative associations with formal education. He remarks that when Art is introduced as a pedagogical tool, their attitude and reluctance soon disappears. They learn to appreciate learning and enjoy it for the first time.

> Lonergan: *…because that opened new doors, because like once they (the inmates) felt they could do drama, well they said 'why can't I do computers? Why can't I go back to school and learn to read and write?'* (p.viii)

Several years ago Lonergan headed an initiative that saw the prisoners act and perform different plays to an audience of other prisoners and family, friends, and the general public. Through participating in drama and performance arts they learned to appreciate the joy of learning and this realisation allowed the inmates to become conscious of other areas where they could educate themselves. The subject of the plays that were chosen by Lonergan to study were done so on the basis that it would take the participants out of their comfort zone and allow them to experience for a time what life is like for different people in society; it is from this that they gain critical awareness of the roles people play in society at large.

> Lonergan: *What does a doctor do? What does a farmer do? How do they think? An the whole idea was you took them out of their own comfort zone and put them into someone else's shoes so that they… and that's what I, where I see the great*

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*value of drama and that sort of stuff, because it allows people or it helps people to get an insight into how the farmer works…* (p.xlvi)

Lonergan: *I'm absolutely convinced, you know that they have unlimited potential for all sorts of social classes and the educated and the non-educated. You don't have to be educated, in that sense, because it is about experience and sharing and dialogue, learning and observing. So there's a whole lot of that, the same way that I'm convinced that music and sport, they're all absolutely invaluable facilities…* (p.xlvii)

Lonergan insists that 'you don't have to be educated in *that* sense[21]', by which he means the formal educational setting. It is through Art that these other essential skills can be identified, nurtured and developed. It is here in the parameters of artistic education that people can learn critical thinking, empathy, accountability and ultimately this connection with learning is what motivates people to participate when they feel an association to the content. The performance arts as both Sommer and Lonergan maintain are the perfect catalyst to allow for these skills to develop and flourish. As in Bogotá in the 1990s, the mime artists were used as an educational tool to allow the residents in the capital city to become visually aware of their own and others' wrongdoing and to assist them in readjusting their mind-set to modify their social standards and practices. The use of the mime artist in the Colombian capital allowed citizens gain an understanding of how their behaviour affects others around them and through this realisation they became aware of the need to become socially responsible and critically aware of the corruption in their city. This is mirrored in the circus project as the main aim was for the circus to act as a catalyst that

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[21] Researcher's emphasis

would bring about a change in mind-set for the teenagers involved: to use unconventional pedagogical practices as a tool to gain practical insight into the repetitive and unproductive culture that made up the majority of their lives. It allowed their non-academic, interpersonal skills to develop and showed them that they have value in the 'classroom'.

> Lonergan: *... you're trying to build them up to be self-controlled, self-disciplined, responsible, accountable and then on the other hand you're also trying to educate them in things that are, you know things like justice, fairness, responsibility as well and all that sort of thing.* (p.xxiv)

Critical consciousness according to Freire is something that needs to take precedence in our classrooms. It is a skill that needs to be nurtured and encouraged from the very early stages of instruction. It is something that should be valued especially by those who find themselves in a disadvantaged situation. He wants a more interactive and dialogue-based lesson to emerge that allows for critique of problematic situations, for problems to be worked through together with the instructor is a more productive form of education. It is here that empathy, critical awareness, social responsibility and inter-personal skills develop. This skill of being able to critically think about particular situations is an invaluable one in all aspects of civic life and yet it is the most under-developed one in our school system today.

## 5.3.2 Dialogue

Freire states that 'to substitute monologue, slogans, and communiques for dialogue is to attempt to liberate the oppressed with the instruments of domestication'. This is the democratic drawback; converting them into masses

which can be influenced. People can only be freed with their reflective involvement in the process of liberation (Freire, 1996, p.52). Dialogue needs to play a central role in the classroom; for too long there has been a passive audience in education. The pupils passively sit and absorb the 'truths' the teacher communicates to them, never questioning the knowledge of the teacher, never partaking in a two-way conversation. In *liberatory education* this practice is rejected and a dialogical, problem-posing education replaces it. This is not to say that the role of the teacher becomes redundant, but that the role alters slightly in how the lessons are delivered and learned.

This dialogical approach was adopted in the circus project and was successful to a certain extent, although not without its challenges and difficulties.

> Lonergan: *Like Will, the guy from the circus, in my view, had the total wrong approach like. He confronted them all, all the time 'Ye won't be in the circus if you don't eat properly', and sure they walked out then and then you had them outside the door and then you had nothing. But the reality was that there's nothing to be achieved by confrontation but by trying to educate.* (p.xii)

The style of instruction adopted by Will the circus trainer was one that was all too familiar to the teenagers and one that did not foster a sense of equality for either instructors or students. In dialogical education the teachers and students must be linked 'by respect, benevolence, dialogue... which overcomes inequality' (Freire, 1978, p.103). As Lonergan mentions, Will did not take this approach and as a result dialogue between the teenagers and training staff became less constructive. The students were documented saying that they felt they were not listened to and that their opinions were not valued. There were

difficulties related to dialogue, interpretation and the style of instruction. However, over time the training staff realised a change of tactic was necessary and a more communicative and open approach was adopted and this saw a change in the attitudes of the teenagers and staff alike. The effect this had on all involved was visible; through dialogue and the approach to the posed problems, the environment was now one that openly fostered learning and interaction. This gave the adolescents a boost in confidence and they in turn felt more supported and receptive to the learning process. Lonergan puts it well when he says;

> Lonergan: *... encouraging and supporting and facilitating their growth. But that no matter what you're doing, it's all about giving them a sense of purpose, a sense of identity, a sense of status, like you know praise, encouragement and all that sort of stuff. It was all about nurturing them, encouraging, relating to them, not talking down to them; they hate that. People thinking they're superior to them. You know, and it is education as well, because they're not aware of a lot of these things themselves so it is about educating them as well and making them aware.* (p.xxv)

Lonergan exhibits signs similar to a Freirean concept of education here when he refers to the need for education to be a reciprocal process and not only a one-way street of instruction. Lonergan rejects the notion of this when he criticises the approach and attitude of the circus trainer Will:

> Lonergan: *Will in the circus, he was confronting them about behaviour, he was confronting them about food and all that, but the reality was that there's nothing to be achieved by confrontation but by trying to educate.* (p.xxxiv).

In anti-dialogical education, with A being the educator and B the student, A has authority over B and the communication is more like a one-way system of reception for the student. Freire encourages a more dialogue-based schooling

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where A and B are both on equal footing and communication is a two-way system, whereby A learns with B and from B and vice versa, leading to a communicative and intercommunicative dialogue. In this form of proposed education the students become aware that culture is a result of labour, and that this labour is an addition to the world they construct. People can create the world around them, through labour and promotion.

By showing this distinction between the two worlds, the natural[22] and cultural, and recognising their role in each, they now reach the understanding that by participating in culture, they can transform their world. Through a more nurturing and encouraging approach, one which places the young person in this case at the centre of the issue and identifies the central problem (bad diet in one of the adolescent's cases) the mentors were able to work with Chantelle[23] to resolve the issue. Chantelle was one of the participants in the circus project, who found the new routine and disciple nature of the circus training difficult. This particular participant also had issues with eating the food provided by the project and refused to eat anything nutritious during training. This caused issues in training resulting in her not participating due to lack of energy and an inability to concentrate on the tasks in hand. Ultimately, she became aware of the importance of diet and the effects it would have on her performance in the circus and in the end it was she herself who made the choice to try something more nourishing and substantial. It was through a constant dialogue with the

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[22] When referring to the natural world here, it relates to the natural world in the biological sense, the world that is not constructed by humans, but more like the animal world.
[23] all the information on the participants is in the public domain.

mentors in the programme and gentle lessons on nutrition that allowed her to be aware of her eating habits and the harm she was doing to herself and it was she who ultimately made the informed decision to try to change her ways.

Freire states that there needs to be an introduction to the democratisation of culture, 'a programme with humans as its Subjects rather than as patient recipients; a programme that is itself an act of creation, capable of releasing other creative acts' (Freire, 1989, p.43). A crucial element of the circus training process lay in the idea that the style of education should be based on dialogue; that engaged all participants and that allowed all involved to participate as equals. This evidently led to an atmosphere that was constructed in trust and allowed for constructive criticism. Freire asserts that 'only dialogue truly communicates' (ibid, p.45). The entire criteria was evident in the circus programme, the adolescents worked with the mentors as equals and the atmosphere was based on mutual respect and on a joint search. The students were allowed to express themselves freely and make mistakes and know that they could work through their difficulties with the mentors as equals, because ultimately the objective of the project was not to obtain a particular mark or pass an exam, but to create a space where they could grow as individuals and learn about themselves and their abilities and talents.

### 5.3.3 Creativity

From this nurturing style and with the use of the Arts as a pedagogical tool the atmosphere allowed for students to experiment and be more creative in their learning. This unlocking of creativity allowed for self-confidence to build and

this ultimately had positive effects on the young people and their perception of themselves and the world they inhabit. As already mentioned, Sommer states that 'in order for social change to come about creativity needs to be linked with social contributions' (2006, p.2). Once the link between the two has been established, we can see the role the Arts can play in order to facilitate social change. In the case of the circus project, creativity was at its core and it was something that those who participated had not experienced before. Their experience of education was one of passive, rote learning that did not excite them or stimulate their imaginations. But once Art was introduced and the adolescents were taken out of their typical static classrooms, this allowed creativity to flourish while also engaging the students and allowing for other soft skills to develop. Lonergan emphasises the need for creativity in education when it comes to people being equipped to meet the intellectual demands of the 21$^{st}$ century.

> Lonergan: *'The modern [labour] demand of students leaving second and third level education today is to think outside the box. 'How do we educate them? In a box!' So how do you expect them to think outside the box when we actually educate them in a box?* (p.xli)

Sommer (2005, 2014) affirms the value of art and creativity in education and society at large. Essentially, Art fashions a creative space for humans to manifest their perception of the world and participate in a constructive way. The circus acted as a creative space and it nurtured and allowed for new interpretations of their world to manifest themselves and opened up a space in the lives of the young people for creativity and self-reflection. (Ken Robinson is

another educator who subscribes to the need for creativity to be a protagonist in the classroom of the masses, not only those on the margins of society.)[24] Our school children need an education that reflects the times in which they are being educated; currently this is not the case. Today's education system was modelled on the industrial age when mechanical and systematic inputting were the nuts and bolts of the industrial revolution and as such the instruction of literacy and numeracy were brought centre stage.

Research in education links practice and appreciation of arts with enhanced rational and social development (Archer 1996; Bertrand 2003; Freire 1989). This underdeveloped and undervalued area in education in addition to educating on social issues and personal matters, if used correctly could lead to potential economic gains as what happened in Bogotá with international investment. If more people were aware and critical of their behaviour and that of people around them, this could result in a drop in crime, and thus reduce pressure on prisons and security and more could be invested in furthering aesthetic education. Through Art people can learn to communicate better and voice their concerns in a constructive way that allows for dialogue and mutual understanding of others. Lonergan speaks from experience here when he says;

> Lonergan: *I'm absolutely certain again I think, I mean we know from experience that the whole area of drama, painting, all that sort of thing. It is a fantastic communication facility as well.* (p.xlv)

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[24] Robinson (2006) has said that the modern education system is 'killing our creativity' and that a new form of schooling needs to emerge in order for the workforce of the future to be able and equipped to deal with the demands and standards of employment in the 21st and subsequent centuries.
https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity

He continues to defend the necessity of Art in Irish classrooms when he says:

> *It's one of the most neglected areas of all in Ireland; the creative arts. We just haven't got tuned in at all to their value, to their potential and certainly in areas where there's very little activity, it's one of the things that I'm absolutely certain has unlimited potential.* (p.xlv)

Although creativity traditionally has not been a core concern of our educational system, it has been gaining importance in recent years, particularly in primary education. The value of Art is being realised and there are those in the education sector such as Robinson who have identified this and are pushing for a more aesthetic approach and for Art to be more prominent on the school curriculum, be it music, drama or drawing.

> Lonergan: *Well there's a lot of good work going on at the minute, I'm aware of a lot of work going on in different groups, teachers in particular trying to promote that whole artistic thing in primary education and eh….but the two awards now in the last year it's fantastic to see primary school adolescents now all being introduced and encouraged to participate in drama and creative arts and I think that that's a good sign* (p.xlviii)

Creativity was considered a by-product of participating in artistic exercises, but what is key here is that through the new-found creativity the participants found self-belief and worth and that education does not have to be confined to the repetition of facts, but it can be designed and shaped to bring out the best in students. The participants in the circus project and the citizens of Bogotá in the 1990s were exposed to a new form of education, an education that is not fixated on scores and grades. It does not measure intelligence on a mathematical scale, rather an education that values the ideas and difficulties of the learning process and works with people to find a creative solution that is mutually respectful to

all involved. It is here that people's creativity comes through, when they are faced with 'problems', be they social, personal or hypothetical, they learn to communicate with each other, participating in a constructive dialogue that allows for repetitive, mundane social practices to be criticised and changed and modified for the greater good. This practice of critically thinking acquired through aesthetic stimulation can lead to brilliant innovative ideas can result, from the most unlikely and undervalued in society.

In Bogotá the citizens became directly involved in the mental and moral overhaul of their city. The success of Mockus as mayor is due to his creative approach towards teaching mundane and age-old lessons, things that had been forgotten or indeed never practised. When the citizens became involved the creativity spread and multiplied and gained momentum. Why? Not because Mockus lectured them about what is right and wrong, not because he told them what to do, but because he creatively gave them a social tool to become creative and participate responsibly in civic life. He connected with the people, spoke with the people and allowed himself to be directed by the people. This is one example of creative dialogical education that proves that creativity is a worthy pedagogical tool whether the classroom is traditional or not, and that cultural agency is the vehicle that can drive it forward.

For Lonergan and the circus project something similar happened but perhaps to a lesser extent. Although his project harnessed creativity by injecting an aesthetic aid into the lives of the teenagers involved, its effect was less far-reaching for a number of reasons: the circus project only lasted ten weeks in

comparison to Mockus' two-year position as mayor in City Hall, and another factor is that Lonergan's project was a very small-scale project. What both situations have in common, however, is that regardless of the size of the 'classroom' they both had a positive effect on the lives of those involved. In these instances creativity should be recognised as a valuable teaching tool, because it taught essential skills, skills that are needed long after leaving school.

In conclusion, creativity is not and should not be exclusive to certain socially privileged groups; it should and needs to supersede class, background, economic status and locality. It should be accessible to all; it needs to be valued by educators as a proper and flexible pedagogical tool. The benefits of having an education system that values creativity are plausible, although a majority remain sceptical about the potential of creativity and this can be seen in the limited investment of artistic programmes in schools in comparison to investment in scientific and mathematical programmes.

The misconception between creativity and intelligence in education needs to be addressed if we are to keep in touch with changing times and economies. Misconceptions of the function of education are that school is a place to train to find a job and that one cannot learn to be creative in school, it is something that one is born with. It seems that you are either intelligent or creative; the education system only serves the intelligent. With the model of education in practice now i.e. industrial, being creative is not seen as being intelligent, as such it has not been adequately valued. However, if we are to take notice of the

fast-changing needs of society and the working world then we need to realise the creative prerequisites in various fields of labour. Some educational facilities have implemented creative practices into their curriculum, but they are few and often in spite of educational policies rather than actively promoted by such policies.

The primary aim of any educational system is to prepare people for life, not only working life as it is generally understood, but for the challenges of modern life. It should facilitate people in the transition from classroom to personal and professional life. This is where cultural agency has a pivotal role and bonds these two perceived opposing requirements; intelligence and creativity. Allowing creativity and cultural agency to forge a place in education will provide for deeper social participation and civic involvement.

### 5.3.4 Access to Social Outlets

Allowing aesthetic education to prosper can lead to the formation of social groups, to social outlets that might otherwise not have been formed. In Lonergan's project, the circus acted as a social outlet for the teenagers, something a lot of them had never previously experienced. As children from disadvantaged areas and coming from families where crime, addiction and unemployment are major factors, less importance is placed on social programmes such as sports or music. These young people had not been exposed to this type of social interaction to the same extent as children from perhaps more affluent areas, and this became apparent very early on in the programme. These social outlets are not only places where people can practise sport or

recreational activities, but more precisely they gain skills that perhaps had not been developed in the classroom and/or the home, such as self-confidence and teamwork. Lonergan asserts that the circus training had amazing effects on the young people's self-perception and self-evaluation and how they perceived others.

> Lonergan: *When they (the prisoners) became involved, eh particularly in drama, it had an amazing benefit in terms of building self-esteem and self-confidence.* (p.vii)

The use of the Arts has been proven to be beneficial in the circus project by the fact that the participants' self-perception improved and they gained much-needed self-belief. Lonergan aided this realisation when he took each of the participants aside each week to discuss their progress and behaviour. One of the ways to track and assert the progress of the adolescents is through evaluation in four key areas: cooperation, communication, language and safety. Each category was ranked between one and five, with five being optimum and one being negative and in need of much improvement. They were asked to assess themselves and each other and this was used to gauge their attitude and participation in the workshops. Lonergan met them individually to discuss their scores and to see if they had given themselves similar marks. This style of assessment was received well and it shows the students' need for regiment, evaluation and their basic need for positive reinforcement. For so long the experience of education was negative and their perception of authority was also an adverse one. Through this scheme the young people were introduced to an alternative form of communication in educational settings and they learned to

view themselves and their abilities as worthwhile. This scheme allowed these eight otherwise self-perceived social misfits the opportunity to invest in their own skills and futures. This form of education proves more beneficial to these teenagers because it involves them, challenges them, and allows them to harness skills and talents that went undetected in mainstream education. This style of education is one that is more similar to a Freirean-style education than the typical Irish school approach and it proved beneficial because it allowed for discussion and dialogue and applied a more social and compassionate slant to learning.

Lonergan mentions one particular young person who has continued with the circus after the programme officially finished. This rekindling of passion for learning was ignited by the social side of the educational programme and the connection that was made during the learning process. At the time of the interview with Lonergan he spoke of how she continues to visit the Belfast Youth Circus regularly and how this has taught her about herself and given her a sense of identity and routine in her chaotic life. This social outlet has become the breeding ground for the flourishing of new skills and self-interpretations and has great potential in assisting in the development of a young woman.

> Lonergan: *And she has, believe it or not she's still going up and down to Belfast regularly. She is now at this stage, on her own. And still sticking with it and she has a tremendous future if she stays with it. I mean the thing with that is that obviously from being in contact with that type of project has opened so many doors for her.* (p.xiii)

The community circus is just that, a 'community', it forges bonds and connections with people but also connects people to themselves and their ambitions and desires. This is the vital connection in all this, the connection and moment of recognition, the spark that ignites the fire and leads to a refreshed outlook on life's possibilities and how we can participate in our own lives for our betterment, and how we can enhance our active participation in society and societal endeavors. It is projects like this one and that in Bogotá for example that allow us to view life and social practices from a different standpoint and to re-learn to re-appreciate the endless possibilities in life once we are active in our formation and participation, be that on a personal, local, educational or national level. Change comes about only through inspired and involved individuals who find the connection between self and society. The Arts allow the two to merge. Performance art and sport teach invaluable life lessons that can be carried throughout life and fine-tuned; a possibility that unfortunately the current educational system does not always do for the vast majority of those who occupy its classrooms. It is a resource that perhaps finds itself most successful with those who have not had the opportunity to develop to their full potential due to different factors such as family, social or economic. Using the Arts as a teaching tool can open the door to innumerable possibilities, because unlike mathematics or science, it is not an exact theory, by definition art is perception and interpretation and there is no wrong answer. This in itself builds confidence, when self-belief enters the equation that battle is half won already. Lonergan's project demonstrates how Art in education occupies a space that

allows those who may not be academically-minded or those who find academia does not connect with them and their ideas; it allows them to interpret the challenges in life and the lessons in life in a manner that cannot be taught through mathematical and scientific equations and theory. A comparison between life and the Arts can be drawn. Both are unpredictable and people experience them in different ways, it is from here that different interpretations can be understood. Life lessons are learnt through experience and mistakes, the Arts allow for an experience to teach some of these lessons and not solely focus on the final outcome. Regardless of age, grade or education lessons can be learned through the Arts.

## 5.4 Factors that obstruct the Arts to aid in the promotion of civic participation

From close analysis of the transcript the following factors which impede the development or the ability to participate in social projects emerged: unfavourable family circumstances, educational and health obstacles and disadvantage, lack of discipline and routine, lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, and underdeveloped social and interpersonal skills.

### 5.4.1 Unfavourable Family circumstances

In order for one to successfully and fully participate in civic life one needs to have a strong base; that initial foundation is believed to come from the family unit. It is where we first learn how to perceive and interact with the world. It is our first classroom in life. Unfortunately this was not the experience of those

who partook in the circus project. The majority of the young people had not been brought up in a stable and happy situation. They came from areas where there is high unemployment and where many have not completed their secondary education. Communities that have been damaged by crime and addiction issues, where a high percentage of the population has a criminal record, do not represent the ideal situation to be born into. They are not environments that provide outlets that engage the community in productive practices. It is vital to have a support network for the personal and social development of a child. Lonergan (2014) says that when such a support system is lacking in the home and when the children find it difficult to participate in education, the necessary support can come through out-of-school clubs and societies. What was apparent in the circus project was that none of the teenagers had experienced a real sense of stability in the lives, either from the family setting or from school. They lacked basic social skills, even the vocabulary to interact with each other as a group. This lack of routine support in their lives has had a major negative effect on their outlook on life and how they have developed as individuals.

W.A. Anderson's assumption is that 'the social participation of an individual is to a considerable degree a function of the social participation of the family. If husbands participate, wives usually do, and if husbands and wives participate, children usually do, so the participation is usually a family trait' (1943, p420). Given that this is a hypothesis from a different era, there could be arguments about its validity to our life today. However if we take this at surface value and understand that the culture of the parents directly affects the culture of the

children in families it stands to reason that if a family culture is negative or social participation is non-existent then the offspring will be less likely to participate positively in social ventures and it is more probable that they will absorb and continue the negative cultural norms of the parents.

During the filming of the documentary the home situations came into focus and it was decided that for the protection of the participants involved not to expose the full extent of the conditions in which some of those involved lived. Due to low-income, struggling single-parent households and in some cases addiction issues, the teenagers and their siblings found themselves living in most unfavourable circumstances.

> Lonergan: *So in actual fact because of trying to protect the children and the other children, the families and the adolescents to some degree ...there was, we weren't able to expose reality. They were worse than that there were worse cases especially, appalling circumstances.* (p.xii)

It became obvious over the course of the programme that family circumstances were a huge contributing factor to the adolescents' attitudes and work ethos and lack of discipline. The lack of consistency and stability in the family home and the lack of parental guidance resulted in the students falling into a detrimental routine over a long period of time. This could be understood as the root of many of their problems and their lack of motivation and interest in school and civic life. If this disinterest is inherent in the family home over a long period of time then the likelihood of that child taking an interest in activities outside the family norm is extremely low. In addition, the child is part of a school system that does not engage students who come from difficult and disruptive

backgrounds. Consequently the child who grows up without any guiding force to direct and help them cannot reach their potential or become responsible citizens.

> Lonergan: *Eddie had no parents, both parents gone, living with his granny like. ...people just have no idea the sort of blocks and the difficulties that adolescents like that have.* (p.xvi)

One of the girls in the programme admits that she had never completed or stuck with anything in her life and that after the death of her mother she found it difficult to see the importance of school in her life. Her own father acknowledges that the death of her mother deeply affected his daughter and that she finds it challenging to get involved in education. However he himself does not seem to be a supporting figure in his child's life. He suffers with addiction and is long-term unemployed. The night before the performance of the circus, he threw a party in the house with no regard whatsoever of the effect it could have on his daughter's performance the following day. His daughter was subjected to all night music, alcohol consumption and no sleep and as a result was forced to perform on minimum sleep.

> Lonergan: *Her father telling me like '[She] never finished anything in her life and her mother died when she was eleven' and all that and then the night before the performance, so on Friday night, what did the eejit do? Brought in all his friends into the house for a party on Friday night, never went to bed...* (p.xiv)

This event is one that highlights the lack of responsibility on the part of the parent and how the child is essentially fighting an uphill battle. The young girl had worked hard and overcome some personal barriers during the training

process. It was a huge personal achievement for her to have stuck with the circus until the end. She was recorded saying that one of her motivating factors for wanting to see it through was to make her father proud and to prove to herself that she could complete it. She was committed to the process and then at the final hurdle when she needed a responsible adult to put her interests first, her father failed her; due to his partying the night before he almost missed her performance. Lonergan mentions that it is these instances that we, wrongly, automatically assume that parents are responsible and will put the needs of their children first. This unfortunately is not the case for very many children; that of course is not to suggest that all parents living in disadvantaged areas are irresponsible or lack concern for their children's well-being.

> Lonergan: *... it is responsibility and support and I suppose respect, all those things that are so important in every family like that; that we all take for granted. But it's not automatic in every family and some adolescents really have to struggle.* (p.10) *You rightly point out a lot of things that we take for granted are very, very crucial and they don't apply like the quality of your parents.* (p.xvi)

The circumstances in which these families live make it difficult for the children to participate fully in school and or social activities; be that due to an inability to focus in the classroom due to lack of sleep or due to the inaccessibility of after-school programmes caused by lack of family support or financial restraints. What the circus project did was to take the young people out of this situation a couple of times a week over a period of time and gave them a sense of stability, something that many had not experienced before.

These debilitating factors and circumstances were found to be one of the major factors in preventing a young person from participating fully in the programme and on a broader scale in school and society. The aims of the circus were to allow the adolescents to see that with a support system behind them and adults to guide and assist them they could achieve so much. The aim of the programme was not to criticise parenting abilities; it highlighted, nonetheless, the fact that not every child starts out in life on equal footing and that at times additional support is needed. Due to family circumstances the young people chosen to participate had experienced addiction, crime and unemployment in the home. The use of the circus as a teaching tool taught the participants that despite family culture, they can find a forum to express themselves and that the cycle of disinterest in engaging in educational pursuits does not have to define them as people.

Lack of family stability and guidance are just some of many factors that affect children from socially and economically disadvantaged areas and is perhaps the most influential in determining the paths these young people take in life. It is something that has hindered their development as students, people and citizens and one that needs to be addressed. The use of performance art in the form of the circus (and drama in the prison) in this social experiment showed the participants that their individual circumstances, although an obstacle can be used as a motivating factor to break the intergenerational cycle and to activate participation in social ventures that promote engagement and development. These social shortcomings posing as problems within the plays were used to

identify different possible scenarios and approaches and how best to resolve the issues. These interpretations allowed the prisoners to learn new perspectives and better problem-solving techniques; techniques and transferable skills that can be used in their lives outside the prison.

## 5.4.2 Educational and Health Obstacles and Disadvantages

The Lonergan project acted as a buffer which allowed the adolescent to stay within an 'educational' setting and not to fall through the cracks which is typical of people who feel school does not serve their needs. The circus project allowed those who find themselves on the margins of society and the traditional form of education to participate and engage in an alternative form of instruction; one in which they were active participants which put their interests at the heart of the lessons and that nurtured their interests and abilities as individuals.

In addition to disabling factors such as discouraging family circumstance and culture, further disabling factors can be identified. These further factors may be the educational style employed in schools and also on more personal levels, difficulties that affect health. The low rates of attendance at school for those involved in the project is another restricting factor related to educational difficulties and has serious repercussions in their search for a liberated life.

Lonergan talks about the rates of attendance in primary and secondary school for those who are serving time in Dublin's Mountjoy prison and the sheer lack of formal education of those passing through the gates:

> Lonergan: *Only about 7% stayed at school after 16 and 57% were gone by 15, so academically speaking and from a basic formal education perspective they were very very disadvantaged. And that disadvantage, that shortcoming was a major handicap to them in progressing in any way or to use that phrase that is used so often in prison to 'rehabilitate'.* (p.ix)

This figure, as Lonergan states, is truly shocking, and the link between lack of education and crime is very strong. Coupled with social disadvantage and a lack of a supportive family network, it is not surprising that there is a high percentage of underprivileged people in Ireland's principal correctional facility. Academics promote the idea of education as a liberating force; Sommer, Robinson, Mockus, Garber, Boal and Freire all go further to state that if the Arts are used to educate, they can form a bridge between the creative and the academic, allowing those who find traditional schooling difficult to learn to appreciate Art as a learning tool.

> In education, concern for social justice education brings together feminist studies, race and multicultural studies, disability rights, identity studies, environmentalism, community based, critical pedagogy, performance pedagogy, social reconstruction, visual culture and other areas. Uniting these educational theories and approaches relates education to a revisioning of the world as a more livable and joyous place for all, with a balance between humans, the environment, and other living beings.

(Garber, 2004, p.4)

In her publication entitled *Social Justice and Art Education,* Garber advocates for art to take a prominent place in the education system stating that the benefits outside the classroom are huge. The lack of the Arts in education can well result in difficulties and disconnection from society and lead to serious issues. We can take the case of Bogotá as one such example. The correlation between corruption and lack of connection between people before Mockus took position

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in the Mayor's office was apparent. Once he took power and used artistic tools such as mime artists as seen in figures 6.1 to promote active participation in the governing of the capital city and involved the citizens in the decision-making process as seen in figure 6.2 as to how to combat these social issues, the connection between Art and civic life and citizens was made and it had dramatically positive effects on the mind-set of the metropolis and how they viewed themselves as individuals and as a whole. The drawbacks before Mockus took control of City Hall were immense and crime and corruption were at an all-time high when he took office, this was a colossal undertaking that saw the mental and cultural overhaul of a city's practices and aimed to educate the city-dwellers in how their collective misbehaviour was the cause of numerous economic encumbrances, social afflictions and political problems.

In the case of the circus project, Lonergan established a link between social disadvantage and the use of artistic means to overcome these limitations. He states that the 'Performing arts are particularly attractive for people who come from social disadvantaged areas' (p.3), this may be due to the novelty of the subject matter and the refreshed approach it takes. Unlike other traditional educational tools, it allows, indeed encourages exploration and self-expression. These two things are something that those from disadvantaged areas might not normally experience on a daily basis.

Social disadvantage is only one of the obstacles the young people had to try to overcome in the project. One of the teenagers also suffered serious health

issues, due to a collapsed lung which stemmed from smoking at such a young age.

> Lonergan: *Paul had been smoking since he was 7, inhaling since he was 8, collapsed lungs at 11, he's a wreck. No lungs, he's not able to breathe and for him to stay and do the circus was an amazing achievement* (p.xvi)

It appears that at every stage of life these teenagers have fought to overcome disadvantage, be it family, social or health. They were not born into equal settings as their peers and so this has had a huge effect on their development as people and how they perform in school. When a person is born into a disadvantaged family or socially excluded neighbourhood this affliction shifts the priorities of those in those situations: for example, school and homework do not take precedence. To give some extreme examples: when a person is living in such situations where they are struggling to feed themself, or clothe themself, or wondering where they will be able to find a bed for the night, because their parents are not present due to their own issues, going to school and pleasing their teacher do not make the 'to do' list. The children who took part in this project all shared this commonality: social disadvantage. As a result of living in socially disadvantaged areas or being born into families where education is not a top priority only added weight to the issue. Yes the children are registered to go to school and most do during primary education, but as they progress to second-level the attendance has been seen to be uneven and in sporadic intervals. As they grow up they become aware of these obstacles add to the culture of the situation in which they find themselves. The vast majority follow

in the footsteps of their family and continue the cycle of dropping out of formal education and this leads to low-paid jobs or unemployment, possible crime and substance abuse, following the same cyclical pattern as previous generations. This is not something that happens from one day to the next, it should be noted. It happens over a period of time and is part of the culture for many of those living in such conditions as described previously.

> Lonergan: *It doesn't happen overnight. I think a school education welfare officer said to me... He said 'they don't drop out, they fade away'. I thought that was very accurate, gradually; missing a day, late, missing two days and eventually... gone.* (p.xxxv)

The consequences of these disadvantages are becoming greater nowadays according to Lonergan, because 'nowadays most jobs are technical, the demands by employers and the standards are higher. The days of labourers, the days of the non-thinker, that you know just go in and do the job, a store-man and down at the docks and all that, they're all gone' (p.36).

What needs to be recognised is that these children from birth are at a significant disadvantage to some of their peers and there is a need for a new approach in education to entice them to participate and become involved in their development. Art once again is the tool that can do this as stated before. Another hindrance that these and others face is one that does not come from their individual experience, but one that is forced upon them in the style of education they receive, as demonstrated throughout this chapter The model of education that we are accustomed to here in Ireland, indeed in many other parts of the world, is one that does not allow for divergence from 'the norm', the

prescribed curriculum. It is not flexible in its structure nor does it provoke real questions from its students.

### 5.4.3 Lack of Discipline and Routine

The lack of discipline and routine in the young people's lives were additional obstacles that were identified from thematic analysis. Due to lack of structure in their home-lives a lot of those involved in the circus project found it difficult to deal with taking orders and having to follow instructions and routines. This is something that the teenagers struggled with and this could stem from the fact that their prior experience related to following instructions and orders was somewhat negative and was based on the teacher issuing orders that the children could not understand or for which they could not see the reasoning on which the instructions were based. This in turn perhaps led to an association between teacher and discipline as something negative. This is a somewhat classic issue with people who drop out of school, it is believed that they cannot or do not want to follow orders and that they show a general disrespect for rules. The dialogical approach to education, teaching and learning allows for interaction between the instructor and the learner, while allowing the student to question and challenge the rules to aid in the better understanding of the reasons for the instruction.

During the project it was obvious that there was a lack of discipline among the young people, both in relation to self and in relation to their attitude towards work. At the beginning they found no correlation between work ethic and

desired results. They did not understand that one needs to be strict with oneself if one is to achieve his/her goal. Priorities need to be realised and sacrifices made in order to be successful. Throughout the process, the young people found this one of the most challenging areas: the desire to want to achieve their goals but the lack of routine and discipline they had. This aspect was one of the most challenging aspects because it was the most alien to them. Most of them in the past had decided to quit an activity when it became too difficult or when it 'ate into' their free time. The challenge of the circus pushed those involved to commit themselves to it and to adhere to the routine and regulations of the project. Through this process the young people learned a lot about themselves and also about the others involved. Teamwork was a major factor in the success of the project as many of the acts performed were duos or groups and so, as Lonergan said they learned that everyone involved needs to show the same amount of commitment if it is to be a success.

The amount of discipline that is needed to perform in the circus is immense, a level of discipline, the degree of which had not been experienced by the adolescents before. The young people also learned valuable skills like teamwork.

> Lonergan: *... teamwork would be huge and discipline and all that sort of stuff. So they were all the things that I discovered.* (p.viii)

Discipline as stated before was something that was alien to the adolescents. Before taking part in the initiative, if they had done something wrong and were reprimanded for it, their usual reaction was to storm out and quit and not come

back, but with the circus and the approach taken by the mentors, the participants were assured that they could make mistakes as it was all part of the learning process. A lot of the adolescents really became involved and invested in their act and although officially the training took place twice a week in Belfast, a number of the adolescents took the time to train at home and perfect their act. In the documentary Jake can be seen practising outside his house with his father and brother and although he appears to be making mistakes, he is determined to master his act.

Some of the others found the discipline element more difficult to follow and at times this was seen to cause problems or at least possible safety issues. Lonergan gives a detailed description of one particular young person who found it difficult at times to adhere to the rules.

> Lonergan: *... this happened hundreds of times in the circus. Someone would be up on the trapeze doing a very delicate manoeuvre and Eddie would kick a football at her and hit her ... across the head maybe and knock her off! I would say "What are you doing, you?!" Or you'd be walking down and next thing he'd spring at you and knock you onto the floor. He's 9/10/11 stone of pure muscle, he could kill you. But he'd throw himself on top of Francesca like, messing. But sure Francesca was going around hobbling half the time 'cause he's [acting like] a[n] idiot.* (p.xxii)

This description tells us a host of things about these young people and their attitude towards discipline. As it is something that they have generally only experienced as negative in the past, they find the transition difficult and often revert back to previous disruptive behaviour. Over a period of time and with

routine, the strictness becomes less daunting and more of a logical necessity in order to perform well.

> Lonergan: *... people don't realise that [it] is all about self-control and discipline and mind over matter so like once you begin to control you reactions and your impulses then you're in control. What happens a lot of the time is the adolescents are not in control and they do the thing and then they say 'What am I doing?'* (p.xxi)

The lack of discipline in their daily lives could be seen to be one of the causes of conflict arising in school and with authority figures; such as teachers or in more serious circumstances An Garda Síochána.

One of the aims of the circus is to help the young people to comprehend the logic behind discipline and why it is important. By learning to show discipline it teaches them self-control, teamwork and to be responsible for their actions.

> Lonergan: *One is around trying to develop the person to have more self-control, be more aware of their actions, to be more accountable for their own actions; because that's one of the things they don't ever take any notice of, of the consequences of what they do. So you're making them and you're trying to build them up to be self-controlled, self-disciplined, responsible, accountable and then on the other hand you're also trying to educate them in things that are, you know things like justice, fairness, responsibility as well and all that sort of thing.* (p.xxiv)

By using the circus to teach these invaluable skills to the teenagers the programme allowed the struggles these adolescents experience on a daily basis to be documented, but also how in the right learning environment they could realise their potential and also understand the consequences of their negative behaviour. It was through the medium of performance art that the adolescents learned how to participate in social settings, a learning environment and also

learned about themselves as students and people. The circus had a profound effect on some the young people's attitudes to school, and/or life in general, and ultimately one of the things that they all took from the experience was a strengthened sense of self-worth.

The circus was the playground where the young people could learn the limitations and possible consequences of their behaviour and how what they perceive to be harmless fun could actually lead to serious issues in certain situations. The circus acted as a safe haven where the young people could learn to think before they acted on impulse and to realise the repercussions of their actions.

> Lonergan: ... *you could imagine him out on the street, someone says something to him [and] before the poor fellow would realise it, he gets the head boxed off him. That's the way it is, down the court, 6 months in Mountjoy, 10 years in Mountjoy for something serious. And that's exactly what you're trying to counteract* (p.xxii)

Lonergan adds that it was due to the continuous contact and routine that allowed one of the participants, Eddie to develop a sense of mature awareness of his actions and not to act on impulse. Major improvements were made on Eddie's part and this continued even after his time with the circus. Lonergan notes that:

> *He found it so difficult, now he had improved a lot over the ten weeks, but he was still a bit impulsive. But he had improved a good bit. And even up in Youthreach where he is, where he still is up in Ballymun, even his Youthreach leader told me that she saw a massive difference in him.* (p.xxii)

This is one of the advantages of using the Arts as an educational tool: it gives troubled young people a chance to explore the limits and learn about themselves

at the same time. It also acts as a means for discipline to be learned in real tangible scenarios; through physical activities. This type of kinesthetic education seems to suit those less academically motivated as it is by nature more 'hands-on'. Through the demanding, regimented and strict routine required by the circus the young people were able to experience the benefits of committing to something and seeing it through to the end. They saw the benefits of their hard work and most importantly, they realised that once they begin to understand that they can change the way in which they interact with people in positions of authority, they can have meaningful learning experiences. Discipline is one of the key factors to success and through the circus project they learned that they have the potential to be successful and take the skills and lessons they learned and use them in other situations. Through the project they learned many things about themselves but self-belief is possibly the most prominent of them.

Before the project the young people had no real ambition in life, they had not striven to do something with their lives, but from taking part in this social project many new doors have been opened and the young people have discovered that they can do many things if they are disciplined and take the time to learn the necessary skills. It is from this that they have learned to believe in themselves and their abilities.

### 5.4.4 Lack of self-confidence and self–esteem

A lack of self-confidence and self–esteem were issues that were very noticeable in the group. The young people had little belief in their abilities and in general

had not experienced a lot of nurturing encouragement in their lives. The aim of the circus project was to allow eight young Dublin teenagers who were on the verge of leaving the educational system due to different social, family and economic difficulties, to participate in a social project that promoted an alternative classroom. The objective was for all eight to complete the project while learning circus acrobatic skills, but also developing soft, social and interpersonal skills and fostering a sense of critical thinking, self-confidence and problem solving. All the objectives – to varying degrees - were achieved and the end result was a group of young people who learned to value themselves and their ideas and who realised the value of working as a team to achieve personal and mutual goals. This newfound belief assisted in team-building and allowed for an appreciation of learning to be fostered. It was through this new-found self-belief that the young people realised the importance of participation not only in educational settings, but also in social circles and that the value of these links with people, the links between both educators and learners is immense. Through the challenge of the circus the young people's limits were tested and it was here they uncovered their true character. It was here that the participants learned about themselves and their skills and strengths and gained confidence in their abilities.

This is an example of how Freire would apply the term 'liberation'. This style of education allowed for a freeing of the young people's minds from worries about academic tests and allowed them to see the value in each other; and that quantifiable means such as test results and grades should not be the sole method

used to measure or judge people's intelligence. A lot of the time the issues related to low self-esteem stemmed from this misconception that they were worth less because they do not perform as well in class tests as their peers and this appears to have had a negative effect on their self-perception. When participating in the circus they realised that they indeed were valued and worthy students with a capacity for learning. In this style of interactive education there was no final exam with a quantified grade and this seemed to work best for these students. After all the objective of the circus project was not to assess the teenagers' academic abilities but to foster a sense of responsibility, self-awareness and community spirit and to challenge the young people to do things they would not normally do.

Lonergan notes that in some cases the self-esteem was so low that when the young people did something well and were praised for this achievement they were unsure how to respond to the compliment and often reverted to profanity in their suspicion and disbelief.

> Lonergan: *[One young woman] had no confidence. Like when I used to say 'Chantelle that was brilliant!' she used to respond 'F\*ck off John'. 'Cause that was the only vocabulary she had.* (p.xxx)

This is quite an insight into the psyche of the disadvantaged adolescent. At the beginning of the social venture the young people were often suspicious of compliments and praise and often assumed the compliments were said insincerely. The reaction of the young people towards being praised shows how

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little encouragement they receive in their daily lives. They show little self-belief and find it difficult to comprehend when others value their efforts.

Lack of self-esteem and self-worth led some of the young people to have few ambitions for themselves; this is understandable when perhaps for the majority of their life a young person's experience is that they are told they do not behave well, they do not conform, they are difficult to teach and that they have very little opportunity to better themselves for numerous reasons.

The circus was a forum that allowed for these conceptions to be challenged. As mentioned above, Lonergan introduced a system of evaluation that monitored and assessed the adolescents' behaviour and attitude and this aided in building their self-confidence. Similar to the system in Bogotá where Mockus encouraged an entire metropolis to monitor and assess each other's social behaviour with football style cards, as indicated in Figure 4.1, and the introduction of mime artists to conduct the traffic flow, as indicated in Figure 4.2, the circus allowed for open dialogue and critique while offering a safe environment for opinions to be voiced. The effect of both of these methods instilled confidence in those involved. Lonergan notes that on many occasions at the beginning of the project the young people would give themselves lower marks; low self-esteem was more than likely a contributing factor for this. When marking themselves they consistently marked lower, but when asked to evaluate another participant they gave very honest and fair remarks and scores.

> Lonergan: *Every Friday I used to do this little evaluation with them about, you know their language, behaviour, effort*

*and all that. And it was fascinating because I used to always ask them first how many would you give out of five for yourself and they almost inevitably, I think 100% consistent over the ten weeks they always marked themselves lower than what they got in reality.* (p.xxviii)

The involvement of the young people in the evaluation process and the conversation that took place due to the evaluations served as a means for the young people to see how their involvement was an integral part of the process and that through committing themselves to the learning experience they became more confident and self-assured regarding their own skills and new-found abilities.

Some of the young people gained more confidence than others and some continue now in education and also continue with the circus training, which has opened and will continue to open many doors of opportunity to them in the future. Some of the young people however returned to their typical way of thinking and living in a certain way, and have dropped out of school and show no sign of wanting to return.

What is important to note is that although on the whole the self-perception of those who were involved improved, the circus only ran over a short period of time and so this may have been one of the reasons why the change was not more consistent.

### 5.4.5 Underdeveloped Social and Interpersonal Skills

The final obstacles identified in the thematic analysis of the transcribed interview with Lonergan concern underdeveloped social and interpersonal skills.

The lack of these skills was evident from an early stage in the project and once again it is believed this may stem from a lack of positive social interaction and from minimal contact with others in nurturing social settings. Lonergan re-affirms time and again his belief that drama and the Arts are the perfect vehicles to aid in the development of these essential life skills in order to participate fully in civic life. The fact that the young people involved come from socially disadvantaged areas and do not perform well in academia only adds to their social and interpersonal skills being underdeveloped: social skills are acquired at an early age, in the homes, from parents, older siblings and close family. The reality for these young people is that their personal situations were not the most nurturing of environments and so by the time they arrived to the classroom they were not on equal footing with their peers and perhaps also in other areas like language skills, such as vocabulary range. The school system in place in Ireland as well as many other developed nations, teaches children on the assumption that they all begin school having developed at the same pace, but Guild, McKinney and Fouts (1990) argue the truth is different and so these children find themselves at a significant disadvantage. If the only social interaction they receive is through school then their peers whose parents are at home to look after them, and/or who participate in after-school social activities or sports are at a significant advantage. The young people's vocabulary and general communication skills were poor when Lonergan first met them; they were unable to construct coherent or logical arguments. A serious lack of vocabulary was apparent and over the course of the project they gradually improved in how they

spoke and voiced their ideas and grievances. Learning to communicate effectively is often taken for granted but it was a revelation for the team that they were met with such inarticulate responses to what appeared to be logical instructions and intentions. On a number of occasions when asked to do something apparently simple the mentors were met with aggressive and rude responses. Vulgarity and ignorance were used by the young people when they became frustrated and this is cited as one of the many reasons why they were deemed unruly and disruptive in classes. The young people learned to better communicate and explain their feelings and this ultimately led to a more social and open environment. The young people learned to use their words to voice their feelings not simply shout and abandon the project as many wanted and attempted to do in the early stage, which was their typical way of dealing with perceived confrontation.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter has dealt with discussing the findings of the Irish case study while drawing comparisons with the case in Bogotá. In addition, the chapter has referred to theoretical concepts of key pedagogical and cultural actors identified as relevant to the findings and which guided the research.

Key factors in the promotion of civic participation in the circus project were identified in two categories, the first as enabling factors: critical consciousness, dialogue, creativity, and access to social outlets. The second category comprised factors that hinder civic participation that were identified as obstacles and these

were labelled: unfavourable family circumstances, educational and health obstacles and disadvantages, lack of discipline and routine, lack of self-esteem and self-confidence, and underdeveloped social and interpersonal skills. Once identified these enabling factors and obstacles were discussed with reference to the interview with John Lonergan and the television documentary. It has been shown that many of these concepts relate to one another and can both assist and hinder the promotion of active civic participation.

The Freirean-style approach that was applied by Lonergan seemed to work well in the circus setting with the adolescents. The dialogue-based instruction allowed the teenagers to learn valuable communication skills and to learn to identify their strengths and weaknesses through weekly structured informative assessment conversations. Lonergan's approach was personalised and new to the young people as many of them had never experienced one-to-one time with their teachers. This seemed to reinforce the personal side of learning and the informal setting aided in instilling a relaxed learning environment. Lonergan affirms that 'you're there for the long run, it's about encouragement, it's about nurturing, it's about belief and if you have all those things in place and you stay with them, building up relationships, showing respect to them, all that sort of stuff' (p.5). By this Lonergan means that the development of young people needs to be something that we as a society need to be committed to and that the process is extremely challenging, but if done correctly can lead to positive social progress and personal development on the individual's part.

This attitude is something that the students probably had never experienced before and it was from this constancy that they learned to work together with the trainers, mentors, facilitators and each other. Learning to work together as a team for the greater good or a collaborated effort taught the young people the importance of teamwork and trust. The circus by nature is a place where faith in your team mates is essential, working with intricate props and needing to rely on others to keep you safe while performing difficult manoeuvres and movements.

> Lonergan: *…teamwork would be huge and discipline and all that sort of stuff. So they were all the things that I discovered. And the other of course would be relating to people, working well with people, eh team building.* (p.viii)

Lonergan mentions the importance of real connection with the learning process. He says that although paper qualifications are very important nowadays and rightly so, what is more important is that

> *'a lot of it as well is what you get out of it yourself as a person. Because at the end of the day, a piece of paper is a piece of paper and a qualification is brilliant, but I would say unless you really question, learn, inform yourself and develop around your learning and your studies, then that qualification it doesn't really matter then whether you get a job is whatever our specialist subject is, you will get a job because of your brain development and your insight'* (p.xliii).

From this it can be interpreted that although they may do well in academic scenarios and tests, if they fail to recognise what has been gained from the experience (not only academic) then they are no better off. What the young people learned from participating in the circus is invaluable to them, personally and perhaps professionally in the future. The skills they gained are ones that can

be transferred and their own recognition of this is what makes the Arts an incredible teaching tool.

The final chapter of this research will reflect on the overall study. Final conclusions will be given and possible further avenues for investigation will be recommended.

# Chapter 6 Conclusion

## Introduction

This final chapter reflects on the overall study and reviews the preceding chapters. It discusses the contribution of the study to existing knowledge, and evaluates the research according to a set of externally-imposed criteria. Following this, specific recommendations for future research are made before drawing final conclusions.

## 6.1 Review of Study

In Chapter 1, I introduced the study and outlined the overall structure of the thesis. Chapter 2 focused on the theoretical framework; theories on cultural agency and pedagogical theories that have been applied and used in the current study. It also highlighted and reviewed existing literature from the field of cultural agency, civic participation and radical pedagogy. In Chapter 3 the methodological approach was discussed in detail. This included an in-depth analysis and examination of the nature of case study theory. The data collection process was highlighted and, in addition the procedure for transcribing the interview was discussed.

Chapter 4 focused on cultural agency and the value of the Arts in civic and social aspects. It linked the Arts with education and active civic participation. In Chapter 5, the research findings were presented. The research findings are grounded in empirical data, principally John Lonergan and the discourse of his experience with the circus project. Through his experiences and also the

experiences of the young people involved provided empirical data from which the findings were drawn. The chapter outlined the research findings of how the Arts and innovative approaches assist in the promotion of civic participation. The findings relate to perceived enabling and hindering factors in the promotion of civic participation. An in-depth analysis of the factors was provided with explicit reference to the interview with John Lonergan and the circus documentary series.

## 6.2 Contribution to Existing Knowledge

This study makes a contribution to existing research in the field of cultural agency, the role the Arts can play in promoting active civic engagement, and the motivating and demotivating factors for civic participation. Firstly, it is one of the few studies exploring the connection between the Arts and the development of more positive attitudes towards social participation specifically from the perspective of young people from disadvantage urban areas in Ireland. Furthermore, the comparison with the Latin American element to the Irish example is also a lesser explored aspect in relation to using the Arts to promote civic participation and enabling new perspectives to flourish in relation to routine social practices. Given the rapid and increasing diversification of the needs and skills required to fully participate in $21^{st}$ century life, such research is both timely and relevant.

Secondly, the study highlights the value of qualitative inquiry methodology for exploring individuals' perceptions and lived experiences, as well as researching

phenomena which have been relatively under-explored to date. In particular the study has underlined the practicality of case study research, as case study research derives more extensive, more contextualized, and more accurate understanding of phenomena and is able to capture a rich array of contextual data.

Thirdly, in terms of the specific research findings, the study has identified important factors – enabling and hindering – which impact on young people's civic participation. These factors have been summarised in table 5.1. Furthermore, this research has confirmed the benefits of the involvement of cultural agents in promoting civic engagement through non-traditional educational avenues and the value they have in providing a refreshing approach to social challenges.

Finally this research has answered the main research question which motivated this study. Its aim was to ascertain how the Arts and innovative politics assist in the promotion of civic participation.

## 6.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Given the challenges young people face today, including the factors have been discussed in the current study, there is indeed great scope for further exploratory research on the effects of affording the Arts a more prominent place in the educational system. While this study has reported on the experience of a group of eight young people from socially disadvantaged areas in Dublin, it would be worthwhile investigating the use of the Arts in more affluent areas in

order to support or contradict the present research findings. It is highly probable that the experience of this study will not be reflective of the experiences of other young people from more affluent areas of the capital city. This study looked at a group of *Irish* adolescents, whereas in an investigation that incorporated *non-Irish* students in urban and rural Irish schools, the results and experiences might prove different. Given that the social circumstances have been identified as influential factors in civic participation, it may be worthwhile to compare this approach using two different social classes.

Research could be conducted on the different attitudes towards aesthetic education and its value, and how it can aid in the promotion of the development of a sense of social responsibility; this would offer a unique insight into the perceived connections between the Arts and civic engagement. The current study shows the relevance of Art in educational settings in order to promote civic participation and soft skills amongst the younger generation attending second level education. Future studies would necessitate investigations of similar scenarios with larger and more inclusive sections participating in educational endeavors. In particular, it would be useful to investigate the role the Arts can play in engaging young learners in primary education in civic projects.

## Afterword

Central to this research is the idea that the area of the Arts in education can be a guiding factor in teaching young people and citizens about the social norms of a culture. Education in all its forms is an area that can benefit from a more

prominent place of the Arts as a pedagogical tool. The Arts can aid in the promotion of civic participation because the Arts allows for new interpretations to emerge without there being pressure on the students to perform academically. In this study a case was taken and examined in which young people from socially and economically disadvantaged urban areas were selected to participate in an experimental social endeavour that aimed to engage them in an 'educational' project. Those who come from disadvantaged areas and/or families appear to have benefited well from a social endeavour that put performance art as the façade for engaging difficult students in an 'educational' setting.

The objective of the study was to suggest that the Arts can be a valuable tool, although not used as a means to teach academic content; it did provoke the young people to be more critical, conscious, honest, hardworking, cooperative, social, and better learners, thus being less hostile and aggressive. The circus acted as a catalyst for real civic collaboration, connecting different members of society, often with contrasted worldviews to forge bonds and connections with each other while learning real lessons in human interaction and personal development. In spite of some serious obstacles in their way, the participants showed commitment and determination in their goals and each of the eight young people completed the project and performed on St. Patrick's Day 2013 in Merrion Square, Dublin

This thesis does not aim to use the Arts exclusively to promote civic participation in educational settings. Its findings suggest that the Arts could be used in a supplementary way to aid the further development of soft skills that

are now required in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and communication skills; skills that appear to be underdeveloped have an enormous negative effect on the lives of young people from social and economically deprived areas.

What can be learned from this social programme is that when people are invested in their education and personal development, whatever those forms of education may be, and when they are encouraged to express their concerns, fears and opinions in an environment that supports critique and reflection, fundamental change can be brought about. In the Irish example the young people's attitude towards learning and their outlook on life, and in Bogotá the attitude of the citizens' towards authority, corruption, and each other's passive civic behaviour. The role of cultural agency in this circus scenario is that it can be described as a bridge between scholarly education and social participation. The aims of this study were to endorse the Arts and Humanities as real educational tools to develop social skills and critical awareness. This style of education allows the introduction of aesthetics and this creates a space from which new interpretations can be found. Along with learning to appreciate the Arts, one can learn valuable lessons in developing imagination, judgement and critical awareness. The Arts can enhance our perception of the world, and ourselves and can be used as a tool to better the world: the personal and the social world.

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# Appendix A

**Consent Form**

I...........~~John Lonergan~~..........agree to participate in Shauna Garry's research study as part of her Master's with Dublin City University.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with Shauna Garry to be tape-recorded

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box:)
I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview ☑
I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview ☐

Signed:                                                    Date: 10 February 2014

i

# Appendix B

## Interview Questions

a) The idea of using the circus to encourage young people back into a learning environment is something that would possibly be described as novel in Ireland. Where did you get the idea for this? What were the initial outlining objectives of the circus project?

b) My research is based on analysing the use of innovative policies and politics to promote citizenship or civic engagement to people who are marginalised and less likely to participate in local governing. I'm investigating if and how the use of the Arts, the circus training in your case, allowed the participants to gain knowledge of their social situation, and how, from this awareness, they learned of their value and influence in society. Essentially to what extent did taking part in this project foster a sense of awareness and critical thinking on the part of the teenagers?

c) Did partaking in the initiative allow the students to become conscious of their place in society and from this realisation did it motivate them to continue educating themselves in order to become active people in society?

d) You once said that 'the Irish educational system is very good at training people to make a living but not how to live a life'. Do you still stand by this statement?

e) The idea of using performance art, the circus to educate young people is something very novel in Ireland. What personal benefits do you think this style of education has for the learners?

f) Do you think that if the politics of education were to adapt to the need of 21$^{st}$ century students and engage the students in issues that are important to them while using the Arts as a base to allow these socially disadvantage youths to develop soft skills an overall benefit would be felt?

g) You are a firm believer that early childhood behaviour and culture can be linked to anti-social behaviour and if not rectified can lead to unlawful acts and imprisonment in extreme cases. Family influence and culture is one of the greatest influences in a young person's life, the second being school. If those children who do not receive encouragement at home come to school already at a disadvantage and for one reason or another do not perform as academically as others from more affluent areas, surely more help is needed in order for these to have a real chance at bettering themselves and proactively engage in society, be that in sport or the economy or education.

h) You have said before that a bit of encouragement can really affect a child for the better. What exactly do you mean?

i) From participating in this alternative education programme what differences did you notice in the children from the first day to the final performance?

j) Would you agree with the statement that allow aesthetic education in school can lead to soft skills developing, skills such as problem-solving, abstract thinking, self-confidence, communication etc.? By aesthetic I mean non-academic education.

k) This idea of negative culture in socially disadvantaged areas can have real lasting effect on the youth of today, would you agree?

*l)* You once said: *"The creative arts would be the one thing that maybe every prisoner would have a great interest in and many of them have a great capacity as well. So artwork, drama, music – all that sort of stuff – great interest and great creativity and whether that's a compensation for other things that they miss in life, I don't know, but one of the things, their characteristics, would be that quite a number of people from those areas would have a background, social background, would have been very creative as people. Some of the stuff they've made and created with their hands would be unbelievable, the detail and the creativity and the innovation. So and that's why I keep saying to people that the perception might be that they're stupid or something, these people are not stupid. I mean they are very, very intelligent, capable people and where you're able to direct their energies and their abilities in another direction they would be very successful so."*

http://dublincitypubliclibraries.com/story/crime-and-city-crime-and-drugs

Do you think that the educational system should cater for different types of intellect and learning styles? The current educational system was created at the time of the industrial revolution and the demands of that time, little much has changed in the ideology of schools, yet the societal values have vastly changed. It's a fair statement to say that not everyone in society is motivated to be an academic or have a job that requires a third-level degree, and yet all these children hear is that school is a training ground for higher education and a doorway to a well-paid career, when in reality not everyone wants this. Some children's have no interest being a doctor or lawyer, they want to paint, to sing, to perform. And yet

their aesthetic ambition is not given the same weight in school. Children should be educated not only for academic and economic reasons but the whole of the child should be considered. Instruction of young minds should be to teach kids their value in society and how to be happy, not simply churn out drones to process information and not have any real input in their own lives and circumstances. The creative and spiritual needs should be taken into consideration. Research has shown that those who are allowed to express themselves freely through art programs in schools, show better signs of critical thinking, problem-solving, lateral thinking, and all these skills are what are necessary in today's society and workplace. Yet they are not being encouraged enough. How is a child supposed to compete with this entire criterion when they have not been allowed to develop and harness these essential life skills?

m) Do you think that there is a link between those from socially disadvantaged areas responding better to creative and engagement activities than the more traditionally academic styles?

n) How do the Arts (music, theatre, and circus) and innovative politics assist in the promotion of critical thinking among young people?

o) Do you think that by allowing the Arts a more prominent place in the lives of those from socially disadvantaged areas will allow for important skills to be recognised and developed?

p)  "If you spend on early intervention you'll save on the consequences often"; this is a statement that can be applied to multiple scenarios. If we consider its application to the promotion of active civic participation and using the arts to

educate the populous about social issues and the importance of civic issues, do you think it will be better received?

# Appendix C

## Interview Transcript

**Interviewee (JL)**: So anyway just saying that one of the things that I discovered that as well which is certainly a major issue for lots young people and especially for children that haven't been exposed to, I suppose confidence building and all that sort of stuff, their self-esteem and self-confidence is zero.

**Interviewer (S)**: Definitely.

**Interviewee (JL)**: And that's a huge handicap for them. They don't have the confidence and the self-esteem and the self-worth that they deserve to have and as a result of that, they keep putting themselves down and they shy away from exposure and all that sort of stuff. And that was one of the things that I found instantly that happened. When they became involved, particularly in drama, in had an amazing benefit in terms of building self-esteem and self-confidence. And the other of course would be relating to people, working well with people, team building, all you see, I discovered that a lot of them had no concept at all of that meant and you know that you can't be an individual all the time and you do need to others. And drama is fantastic for that, because once you get on the stage you discover very quickly, I mean I depend so much on you, if you don't be there with your lines, if the prop isn't there, like, it's not going to work.

**Interviewer (S)**: Yeah.

**Interviewer (S)**: So teamwork would be huge and discipline and all that sort of stuff. So they were all the things that I discovered and felt that, you know so there was a lot of dynamics to it and so basically in the prison there was building fellas' self-esteem, confidence, giving them, I suppose, helping them be aware of a talent they had, that they never knew they had and giving them an opportunity to develop that talent and then seeing the benefits of that, because that opened new doors, because like once they felt they could do drama, well they said 'why can't I do computers? Why can't I go back to school and learn to read and write?' And so that was where a lot of that came from and then in the other areas of the creative arts as well it was I discovered was that some of them were amazingly gifted and talented and I discovered, I became aware of the fact that there's no connection in the world between opportunity and talent an ability. You know you can be the most talented person in the world, but if you haven't got the opportunity to become aware of it, well then sure what good is the talent? So I became very conscious of opportunity was far more important than talent, because without the opportunity, the talent was of no use to you. And the talent, if you haven't discovered your talent, and if you're not able to use your talent well then you have missed out on the, I suppose main strength of your makeup, whatever that is. Whether it is academic or creative or whatever it is. And so on all those fronts, see the level of say stereotype or normal education, the levels of academic, normal education in prison was appallingly low.

**Interviewer (S)**: Yeah.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Only about 7% stayed at school after 16 and 57% were gone by 15, so academically speaking and from a basic formal education perspective they were very, very disadvantaged. And that disadvantage, that shortcoming was a major handicap to them in progressing in anyway or to use that phrase that is used so often in prison to rehabilitate. There was nowhere to go because they had to have these skills and they hadn't any knowledge, they hadn't any abilities really so all these things are combined together, em, and then when I left, I became, as I said, actually. One day I was in talking to an independent television company about the possibility of taking 8 prisoners who have left prison and monitoring and working with them. And the idea was that you pick up if there was a housing issue well you got them accommodation and then you monitor and see would that happen, you know that kept them out of trouble. And they needed counselling, you'd look for state services first, if they weren't available then you bought the counselling. That's what the idea, but anyway it wasn't, or RTE didn't buy into it. They came away and you know asked me about this thing with the circus and would I be interested in doing that with 6 kids and I said I would and we put in for that and they got it ad that's how that started. And the principle of that was, to go back to link to what I said was every child, every person has a gift. Performing arts are particularly attractive for people who come from social disadvantaged areas and so the idea was that they would select 8, well 6 that was the figure because they thought that 2 of them would drop out. And  the whole idea then was then to bring them to Belfast for 10 weeks and to introduce them to the community circus there and

see would they have skills, see could they be developed and see could they actually perform on the 16th, which is the eve of St. Patrick's Day. And that's what happened and we brought them up every Thursday and Friday for two days to Belfast and gradually over the 10 week period, you know, their particular individual strengths were identified and like some of them were great at pole-climbing and all that and some were great at trapeze, some were better at, you know, different things, juggling and things. But I suppose the reality was that all 8 of them discovered that they had some particular talent and that went along. And my own personal sort of objective was to bring them to the stage where they would perform, because I'm a great believer of that once you experience something as great as performing for the public for instance and getting a reaction from the public like applause and that, that that is a fantastic endorsement of you as an individual.

**Interviewer (S)**: So that was like your personal kind of objective, but did RTE at all set any objectives for the programme or...?

**Interviewee (JL)**: No, their only I suppose objective would have been viewers...

**Interviewer (S)**: Getting it finished and viewed.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah, I suppose they have, I suppose RTE because they're a national broadcasting company; I suppose they have sort of a social ...

**Interviewer (S)**: Responsibility in some way...

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah, yeah. To highlight the social inequality and I suppose part of it was about that. Was trying to make the, you know, the broader population aware that some fantastic talented children are out there, but unless they get the opportunity when then all that no wonder they get into trouble. They're not occupied, they're not involved, and they don't have activities...

**Interviewer (S)**: They don't have anywhere to channel that excess energy...

**Interviewee (JL)**: Exactly and they're written off and dismissed. I suppose part of the old, I mean the programme gave me an opportunity over 4 weeks, I suppose to articulate a lot of that philosophy about don't write off anybody, everybody has an ability just stay with them, you're there for the long run, it's about encouragement, it's about nurturing, it's about belief and if you have all those things in place and you stay with them,   building up relationships, showing respect to them, all that sort of stuff. Em, eventually they will reciprocate that and respond and I think generally speaking the programme proved that.

**Interviewer (S)**: I think it did definitely and I think one of the things was that like I know that there was like different kind of, ye know individual difficulties and obstacles that each kid had to overcome, some was just showing up in the first place and kind of going through the whole process, and I know one of things that kind of struck me as interesting was the diets and how much of a fuss and a fight they put up. Basic things like, ok, 'you asked us would we make sausages and potatoes' and you did and they still weren't happy because they

were used to them, like packet potatoes or instant stuff and things like that. Even like at such a kind of fundamental level where a lot of people would just assume you get your meat and three veg for dinner, but even stuff like that to me…

**Interviewee (JL)**: Absolutely I suppose Shauna the first thing I would have to tell you might appreciate or see into this already. Their reality was a lot worse than what came over on television for most of them you couldn't show their life, their family conditions were so bad you couldn't show them.  So in actual fact because of trying to protect the children and the other children, the families and the kids to some degree we weren't able to expose reality. So in terms of yeah like the diets and again I suppose, it's very obvious like the different techniques. Like Will, the guy from the circus, in my view, had the total wrong approach like. He confronted them all, all the time 'Ye won't be on the circus if you don't eat properly', and sure they walked out then and then you had them outside the door and then you had nothing. And, so I mean what I learned, I had a knowledge before I took on circus from my own experience but I mean, it was reaffirmed time and time again, avoid confrontation, don't confront people, because once you confront those kids, their reaction is 'F*ck off, out the door: gone'. And that's how they behave and so the idea like, Francesca, the little blondie one, with the trapeze, she said at the very beginning 'I never completed anything'. And you see, the objective for her was to get her to complete, because once you've completed something she had broken a new barrier.

**Interviewer (S)**: Yeah.

**Interviewee (JL)**: And she has, believe it or not she's still going up and down to Belfast regularly.

**Interviewer (S)**: She is not, is she?

**Interviewee (JL)**: She is now at this stage, on her own. And still sticking with it and she has a tremendous future if she stays with it.

**Interviewer (S)**: That's brilliant.

**Interviewee (JL)**: She's a natural.

**Interviewer (S)**: I mean the thing with that is that obviously from being in contact with that type of project has opened so many doors for her. One now that she's after finishing the project and that alone is probably after giving her so much confidence.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Oh it has. I mean she was thrilled, you'd have to see her the day, you know after the first performance on the Saturday of St. Patrick's weekend last year. It was on a Saturday, it was the 16th and when she finished her first performance about one o'clock in Merrion Square, I mean, I'm telling you she was 10 foot tall. She was so thrilled.

**Interviewer (S)**: Really.

**Interviewee (JL)**: And she was still she was the one; believe it or not, she was the one that put in the least amount into the practice, the least amount. And she was by far the best naturally. So on the one hand, she had a tremendous, like I

mean, and she was never on a trapeze in her life. And still at the end she was hanging out of her leg.

**Interviewer (S)**: It was brilliant.

**Interviewee (JL)**: And I mean how she got the strength and she's at that height like. Her upper body strength for a little girl was unbelievable like. And then she had this natural poise and she was like a little angel. You know so, so I mean I would imagine her up on the ribbons and you know...

**Interviewer (S)**: Cirque du Soleil.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah and you know I'd say, I bet she is now like, she's going to be a natural, but you see that's the thing like, her father telling me like 'Francesca never finished anything in her life and her mother died when she was eleven'.

**Interviewer (S)**: I think structure probably is one of the most influential things like structure or family culture probably would be a better term. It's just a matter of...

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah and it's responsibility and support and I suppose respect, all those things that are so important in every family like that; that we all take for granted. But it's not automatic in every family and some kids really have to struggle. Defeated very badly themselves and you know, I've always believed myself in the philosophy that you show respect to gain respect; I'm an absolute believer in that. You don't demand respect, you show respect to other

people and in the prison I always found that always worked. If you show respect to prisoners they'll respect you or vice versa. So it's the same with those kids like, I mean they were all, in their own different ways. Paul had been smoking since he was 7, inhaling since he was 8, collapsed lungs at 11, he's a wreck. The public would only see this lazy fella not getting up in the morning, but I mean, no lungs, he's no able to breathe and for him to stay and do the circus was an amazing achievement. The parents gone, he's staying with his uncle, so like... The reality for Eddie the fella on the …..pole climbing. Eddie had no parents, both parents gone, living with his granny like. See so people just have no idea the sort of blocks and the difficulties that kids like that have. And the thing is, I suppose what I was trying make the point was that we were only showing 8 of them, there's 8,000 in Dublin alone or more maybe, but there's definitely 8,000. The kids of that age in that cul de sac with no future really, unless someone goes in and starts. That was the idea really to show that looks this is happening and it gave them an opportunity that they would respond to and get benefits out of it and that it would led them on to better things in the future.

**Interviewer (S)**: I think so and I think also that from you know, it being televised and stuff, I think a lot of it just goes under the carpet, not a lot of people, they think they know what's going on, but they don't. The fact that it was given a platform for people to kind of, you know in their own homes see what, not to the full extent, but to see what certain kids go through. I think for me it kind of gave me a sense of social responsibility, these kids really do need, I mean I'm from Artane, but it's only a stone-throw away from Coolock.

**Interviewee (JL)**: I know yeah…

**Interviewer (S)**: And an awful lot of the kids that I went to school with or that went to the next school down the road, they would've been in very similar situations, where parents like come from places or suffer with addiction or whatever the case may be, one parent's at home or one isn't or both are gone or they're with their grandparents and stuff like that. And you can kind of see although we all went to the same school, you could see it at a very fundamental level, looking back at it now retrospectively primary school like. For me when I went to, I came home and the first thing was: do your homework and then you're allowed play and that was done and that was the way it was and that was fine. And I always remember kids coming in, no homework, coming in late, no uniform, no structure, no lunch, and that obviously has a serious knock-on effect. Whereas my mother was just 'you're going to school, you're doing your homework and then you're allowed to go and play and that was just the structure. Whereas that was the structure my mother was brought up with, but 5 or 6 doors down… and it's certainly an inter-generational thing, but I think a lot more needs to be done to let people become socially aware.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Absolutely, it's all that sort of a process like, they start off like that and then they're attracted then to things like crime, drugs, anti-social behaviour, all that sort of thing. Sometimes they do it to show off, sometimes they do it to get attention, and sometimes they do it because they don't know any different. But it's a sort of a spiral of downward trend all their lives and like they have very little. I mean Chantelle, the blonde little girl…

**Interviewer (S)**: The really tall girl…

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah, very talented young one, but no confidence in the world. I mean she openly said on the programme that her ambition was to be on the social welfare and to have babies. And she's already fulfilling that because she's pregnant now at this stage at 15.

**Interviewer (S)**: She's not, is she?

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah. And her mother is a great mother and a great woman and she's two sisters and three of them and her two sisters, the image of her by the way, but they're fine and working and no problem, never in trouble. The mother said 'they're never in trouble, never caused me an ounce…' And Chantelle has been messing since she was about 10. Hanging around with fellas that were in prison, going up, I mean she told me when I met her that she was a regular visitor up at Wheatfield to meet her boyfriend. And I said 'Ah Jesus'. And then he's years older than her and so you can see again like you say it rightly so. You can see where the culture, where this sort of, you know, short-sightedness and innocence comes into play and she's going to have a baby at 16, she's a baby herself.

**Interviewer (S)**: And then it's the cycle will probably start again, because…

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah and you rightly point out a lot of things that we take for granted are very, very crucial and they don't apply like the quality of your parents. Like your parents have it together if they know what they're at and I mean I remember this young woman came up on to the staff of Mountjoy one

time and was chatting to her few first days she was in the job and I said 'where are you from?' and she said 'Sean McDermott Street'. Sean McDermott Street is just down the road, but 99% of people from Sean McDermott Street ended up in Mountjoy in the other side. And this was a girl who was on the staff and I was saying to her, I said 'How come you survived? Like that you didn't get caught into all the culture?' And she said herself, 'My mum took me by the hand to school, she collected me from school, she brought me home, looked after me, got me home', right through to second level and completed second level and she's a fabulous girl as well now I mean, she had so much developed and benefited from all her experience and here she was now you know in many ways a role model for the families in those areas.

**Interviewer (S)**: Oh without a doubt.

**Interviewee (JL)**: But again the hub of it all, foundation was her mum.

**Interviewer (S)**: Well that's what I would say as well like, I mean, in my own kind of personal situation my mam was the one who was constantly pushing us to participate in different things. Like it's just me and my sister, I'm the eldest by two years and I always loved school, whatever it was that kind of got me hooked. At the beginning I loved it and I would be quite academic or at least I'd like to think I am. But my sister on the hand, she's just mental and she just wanted to be out and playing and everything else and that was fine, but she just constantly had of all this excess of energy and by the time she hit secondary school, school wasn't for her, she felt the teachers didn't understand her and

this is probably a lot of the similar situations of the kids that you deal with. But what my mam did was she put us both into Martial Arts classes to channel the energy and it calmed my sister down completely. And it taught her all of the things she couldn't learn in school like self-discipline, you have to finish this, you have to learn that and it did kind of have a knock-on effect. My sister finished school and stuff like that and she went to go and study, she studied Social Care, she did it first in Colaiste Dhulaigh and then she did a year or so in up in Belfast herself. But it wasn't for her, she wasn't academic and left college whatever and she's a hairdresser now and it's this whole thing of creativity as well like so, I mean, that could've gone the opposite way if my mam wasn't there to support us.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Absolutely definitely.

**Interviewer (S)**: And unfortunately that's what did happen to some of the friends that my sister would have had around that time, in the likes of getting pregnant or drugs or whatever.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah like people don't realise that Martial Arts is all about self-control and discipline and mind over matter so like once you begin to control you reactions and your impulses then you're in control. What happens a lot of the time is the kids are not in control and they do the thing and then they say 'what am I doing?' And the prison would've been and is full of people like that. I mean if a riot starts in a prison you can be dead certain that everyone will

be stuck in the middle of it. Ten minutes later 'Why were you doing that?' 'I don't know.'

**Interviewer (S)**: I think in the programme you mentioned, you kind of used Eddie as an example at one stage, because he'd just kind of go off the wall. Like when you brought them to Paris, he was giving it loads with the musician in the street, but if that was in another situation, he could possibly get himself in trouble, because he's so...

**Interviewee (JL)**: Hyper and impulsive...

**Interviewer (S)**: Hyper and impulsive and he doesn't think of what's going to happen in 5 minutes.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Like, I mean this happened hundreds of times in the circus. Someone would be up on the trapeze doing a very delicate manoeuvre and Eddie would kick a football at her and hit her a belt across the head maybe and knock her off! "Feck it!" I would say "What are you doing, you eejit?!" Or you'd be walking down and next thing he's spring at you and knock you onto the floor. Ye know you're a little light girl in comparison to him. He's 9/10/11 stone of pure muscle, he could kill you like. But he'd throw himself on top of Francesca like, messing. But sure Francesca was going around hobbling half the time 'cause he's a fecking idiot. But that sort of thing, as you said you could imagine him out on the street, someone says something to him before poor Eddie'd realise it, he gets the head boxed off him. That's the way it is, down the court, 6 months is Mountjoy, 10 years in Mountjoy for something serious. And that's

exactly what you're trying to counteract. Like and he found it so difficult, now he had improved a lot over the 10 weeks, but he was still a bit impulsive. But he had improved a good bit. And even up in YOUTHREACH where he is, where he still is up in Ballymun, even his YOUTHREACH leader told me that she saw a massive difference in him.

**Interviewer (S)**: Oh brilliant.

**Interviewee (JL)**: In the old days when he'd be stuck in everything, nowadays he's more likely to stand back a bit and stay disconnected a bit from things so....So it is a gradual thing.

**Interviewer (S)**: Definitely, and I think that that whole kind of like thing of like 'take a step back for a second, see where the possible consequences are, that would lead into as well some of the stuff that I'm doing with regards to like the Latin America, the thing is Colombia. Because a lot of the time although it was illegal, let's say what different things that were happening, breaking traffic laws or running somebody over obviously is illegal but then traffic police turning a blind eye, getting a fifty, we won't worry about it, things like that. Although obviously they are illegal, they were socially acceptable. Well look, you know, I'll drop him a fifty and it'll be OK and it was this kind of thing or re-training people to see the consequences of you know, that person has a husband or a wife or kids it's not only their life that you're kind of messing up or whatever. I know that's obviously an extreme thing but the idea is that is kind of the moment of recognition where it can go this way or it can go this way and

training people to think like "Jesus like I can't be going around messing!" Like Eddie, for example, pushing Francesca, well if it's in the m idle of the street and there's a bus coming down the street then Francesca is gone. It's these kind of little tools almost to make people more kind of like critically conscious oF what's going on or what could happen.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah, I suppose my belief is that it's a bit of both, there's two things happening simultaneously. One [element] is around trying to develop the person to have more self-control, be more aware of their actions, to be more accountable for their own actions; because that's one of the things they don't ever take any notice of, of the consequences of what they do. So like you said if someone pushes you and you get a belt of a bus. that wasn't you fault, that was your fault, you caused the thing. And that's the one side of it. I think it's all about trying to help the person become more aware. I mean, I'm a great believer myself that the right, you know the best and most difficult challenge and the biggest challenge often is to develop that sense of self-discipline into people, because a lot of the fellas I know that's one of things; their biggest weakness. I used to call it and still call it occasionally Shauna, moments of madness, it has devastating consequences. The person never intended to do what happened, but they did it without thinking and then the consequences were huge like. And then the other side of it then is around, you know what you're talking about there really it's really about justice and integrity and decency and all that. Like if someone drives over you with a bus, that that driver is brought to justice and not allowed away with it. Then, you know corruption is when they give you €50 and

you buzz off and you say you'll close your eyes to it and that's the worst form of them all. So you're making them and you're trying to build them up to be self-controlled, self-disciplined, responsible, accountable and then on the other hand you're also trying to educate them in things that are, you know things like justice, fairness, responsibility as well and all that sort of thing. Now I've said this myself over the years, it wasn't just with the circus project. I was involved with different levels of young people for the best part of forty years with places like Shanganagh, Lauren House ad places like that. And I've no hesitation in saying all that, over a period of time, no matter what you're doing, horticulture, agriculture, sport... it doesn't matter. If you have a connection with young lads and if you treat them with respect and you don't try to impose but you nurture. I use that word 'nurture' a lot instead of the thing "I'm telling you"...

**Interviewer (S)**: Encouraging...

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah, encouraging and supporting and facilitating their growth. But that no matter what you're doing, it's all about giving them a sense of purpose, a sense of identity, a sense of status, like you know praise, encouragement and all that sort of stuff. It doesn't matter what you're doing, you know, I found that sport for instance when I was younger we used to play sport in the open centre against the lads or with the lads or against them and there was no better place to build up your kudos with them than playing football with them. They'd belt at you, you'd belt at them: all over at the end of the day, you shook hands, you came off. That sort of stuff, you're out in the, you know, in the grounds with them, you cut the grass with them, did the shrubs or

whatever. The same old thing though, it was all about nurturing them, encouraging, relating to them, not talking down to them; they hate that. People thinking they're superior to them. You know, and it is education as well, because they're not aware of a lot of these things themselves so it is about educating them as well and making them aware.

**Interviewer (S)**: Yeah, I think though like obviously education unfortunately nowadays has taken a turn and when you think of education you think of automatically of schools, tests, maths, science... unfortunately in the last twenty/thirty years it's just been, in a sense, academic inflation. It used to be a thing of 'get you Leaving Cert and you'll get a job', but now you need a degree, now you need a Masters, now you need a PhD. And I think at times people who identify their skill, you know whatever it is they have, if they're lucky enough to identify it, grand. If they're not then it's like OK, 'what are the different avenues?' But I think that one of the things that you've said is you know in the likes of Shanganagh, which is closed now the Open Centre for the boys, I think in your book you had said that you were like planting shrubs or vegetables...

**Interviewee (JL)**: Cabbage, cabbage...

**Interviewer (S)**: Cabbage or something and the lads worked really hard for months and weeks and it finally kind of started to grow and then somebody treaded all over them...

**Interviewee (JL)**: Messing yeah. But they ploughed up and down it, broke every one of them.

**Interviewer (S)**: In a moment of madness.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Ten seconds. Wrecked. Like they didn't see anything wrong with about ten of them taking off down through the whole garden and running on top of the little cabbages which were about that high. Now it took weeks and weeks and months of work to get them to that stage and you were just at the stage where you were beginning to admire your hard work and here they are fecking chasing each other around the place and...

**Interviewer (S)**: Gone.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah and not realising. Yeah but again, their lives are like that: do wonderful work and then do something stupid and wreck everything. Like being in school and getting on well and the next thing some stupid thing happens and they hit the teacher and something. Now they're expelled, all their great work has been gone for nothing and I suppose that's what you're trying to...

**Interviewer (S)**: Prevent.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah exactly, it's all about prevention really. It's all trying to say "Listen these are the consequences". But it's not as easy as people think in the sense of trying to get them to think like that, because their nature is that they think that they don't think at all. They don't think at all. The act first and then they say 'Oh Christ what did I do?!' And by the way many of them end up in prison exactly on that basis. [They] did something stupid and hen say 'Oh

Jesus, why did I do that?!' But it's too late because they have killed somebody or they have run into somebody, or stolen a car...

**Interviewer (S)**: So I have just a few questions here...

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah belt away.

**Interviewer (S)**: You've already answered some of them, but I'm going to ask them anyway, if that's OK.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah perfect yeah.

**Interviewer (S)**: So let me see, do you think that partaking in the initiative itself allowed the students or the kids essentially to become kind of a little bit more conscious of their place in society in general? And if they did realise this then from this realisation, do you think it motivated them in a sense to stick to school and stick with education, in whatever form may be?

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah, I don't think it did Shauna and I think the reason for that is that is wasn't long enough. I think it left... it began to sow the seeds of some of that. And I think that it did, I certainly thought and saw a lot of progress and a lot of movement in their lives and in small little different ways. like you might remember every Friday I used to do this little evaluation with them about, you know their language, behaviour, effort and all that. And I was fascinating because I used to always ask them first how many would you give out of five for yourself and they almost inevitably, I think 100% consistent over the ten weeks they always marked themselves lower than what they got in

reality. But the thing was that the way it began was trying to make them aware of like bad language. But they did actually become more conscious of their language and starts saying things like 'well I wasn't too bad this week now, I thought I did better or I thought I was better so I'd give myself a four.' And actually they would have had so I did mean that they were beginning to think about some of those things. The problem with the circus, as I think as I've said myself on a few occasions, you were talking about a maximum of 12 weeks. You won't change a lifestyle pattern in 12 weeks. But I think the idea of the circus was to sow the seeds to say if that was continued on a more consistent basis for two or three years, you'd definitely change.

**Interviewer (S)**: Oh definitely without a doubt, because that would become the norm for them then...

**Interviewee (JL)**: And you'd gradually as well be building on the plusses like and the negative would gradually begin to disappear and disintegrate. So I you had longer with them over a longer period of time, I think that in many cases they would, I mean saw tremendous improvement in all of them in their own different ways now some of them improved in different ways. But I mean all of them improved in their own unique way and that was in my view, in terms of a life or in terms of times of change, you know the period of change, three months is a very short, when you take the getting to know them. It took us a month to get to know them, naturally enough. We'd only two days a week so by the time we got to know them, because you do need to know people, because what would apply to one would not apply to another. You know, they've different

personalities and different sensitivities and all that sort of stuff. Some of them, their behaviour, you know Amiee was nearly too well behaved, she hardly said a word out of place in the whole four months.

**Interviewer (S)**: This is the girl with the glasses.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah yeah. So like you know, you take her and Francesca never stopped mouthing and talking and giving out. So like you have to sort of... Chantelle was contrary to [inaudible] she's very good-looking and lovely poise and everything but Chantelle had no confidence. Like when I used to say 'Chantelle that was brilliant!' she used to respond 'F*ck off John'. 'Cause that was the only vocabulary she had. I realised that as well Shauna, that was one of the things that I didn't realise; the significance of vocabulary. Now we again take that so much for granted that when you go into college, you're able to stand up and you're able to articulate, and ask questions and respond. Or when you are asked questions, you're able to stand up. What I was saying was 'Don't take that for granted'. Not everybody can do that. And that is an amazing, now it's a natural gift too and most people as I said we just have it by pure nature, but if you don't have it, if you don't have vocabulary, if you can't express yourself and their only word 'F*ck off John'. See if you tell an employer 'f*ck off' when he tells you something good like he's not going to tolerate that and so a lot of these things like for different people, like one of the girls in the production team when she used to ring Chantelle she'd say 'Who's that?'. And she's constantly saying 'Chantelle, that's not a way to answer the phone!' 'Who's that?'

**Interviewer (S)**: Yeah. See one of the things as well is like this whole idea of negative culture within the kind of socially disadvantaged areas, it would have like a real lasting effect, because perhaps they probably haven't ever, you know really kind of received positive feedback...

**Interviewee (JL)**: Absolutely!

**Interviewer (S)**: ...in a way and when they get it then, they're just like 'Aw no don't trust this, no way, stop'.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Absolutely.

**Interviewer (S)**: And so I think then it does have a knock-on effect if they get jobs then.

**Interviewee (JL)**: But the amazing thing is over a period of time, it's amazing. The other thing... [inaudible]... they were better able to cope with it and they nearly expected it in the end like, 'Wasn't I good today?' But like what I found with Eddie and it came out very clear in the film as well in the programme. Like when I'd be down and Eddie would do something mighty impressive on the pole and I'd say 'Eddie that is fantastic!' Then I'd come up to the hostel and he's be acting the eejit! I'd say 'What are you doing?!' and he'd say 'What are you doing? You're praising me down in the circus and now...?' And I'd say they're two different things. One is you are brilliant at the circus when you put in the effort; you're acting the eejit now. But he was finding it very difficult to separate, you know. You praise him down in the circus, but then how can he come up to the house and...

**Interviewer (S)**: Like a free pass...

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah you know you can't be throwing things and acting the eejit in the house. So I suppose, in response to your question Shauna, I'd be saying 'Look, it's a long-term thing. You can't force change, but you can support it, encourage it and nurture it. And that's what I was trying to do was simply to say look in a short period of time we can bring them along. This is evidence by the way they behave and by what they have achieved, but it's only the beginning and it's not the end and they need an awful lot more.

**Interviewer (S)**: Encouragement and stuff and I know that you really do feel that the Arts would be and that like it is the perfect vehicle for this...

**Interviewee (JL)**: Well the Arts is the catalyst for it. It allows them to come in. As I keep saying, what my definition of it is: you know when they're outside the door, you go nowhere. You know, they're outside the youth club, the school, whatever. When they're outside, you ain't going anywhere with them because you're totally disconnected. When you have them inside, well now you have some chance, because now you're with them. And I believe that sport or the creative arts or music or a youth club, anything that brings them in, facilitates that dialogue, connection and then gently you can. And you know that would be another word I would use 'gentle'.

**Interviewer (S)**: Yeah, definitely.

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**Interviewee (JL)**: Because they're so used to aggression that they're so aggressive themselves that the last thing they want is someone meeting them with more aggression.

**Interviewer (S)**: Yeah and the thing is as well perhaps what we would interpret as aggression is just normality for them.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Absolutely.

**Interviewer (S)**: So people are always coming from different points of views.

**Interviewee (JL)**: That's exactly it, our, you see, that's the thing what I suppose it's about is around some degree in anyway; empathy. People have no idea.

**Interviewer (S)**: Not a clue.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Not a clue and I kept saying that to them like and you know the reality is that, you know, every single person has a life story, you have one, I have one. Nobody knows the full extent of your life story or my story. It can be fantastic or it could be horrible. But the reality is that nobody else knows. And we judge people so easy, we make our mind up, but we haven't a clue. Like a child could be going through horrors like, that child could be abused, could be physically, sexually, emotionally abused for years. So now you're coming in as an outsider thinking you know, you don't know anything about the person at all. And I've always argued that that's where you start. You start at a basis of 'I don't know'. And you reach out to people and you stay the course with them and

all my life experience would show that once they realise, I mean I've always said if they say to their friends 'He's sound, she's sound '; you've made it. And you won't get that accolade unless you've bloody well earned it. And that means they'll test you and you if you get that from them, if one of those kids says 'He's sound' or 'she's sound', you've earned it. And then they're sort of putty in your hands, because you can work with them then. And the biggest struggle sometimes is getting them to that stage. And that's why when people say 'Do this!' [they're like] 'Ah f*ck off!' and so they put them out. And so I was saying all the time to Will in the circus, like he was confronting them about behaviour, he was confronting them about food and all that, but the reality was that there's nothing to be achieved by confrontation but by trying to educate. Like the amazing thing was that Anna, the producer, and Mabel who were working with me on the project, she had worked a lot and both had worked a lot with Chantelle around diet and explaining to her about diet and all that and the last night when we were in Belfast and we went out, she did actually eat some food. We were in a restaurant the very last night and she did actually get some food and eat. So again, it took a long time but was gradually beginning to make her aware that you don't have to live on chips. Like that's what she ate; chocolate and chips. You can't live on chocolate and chips. So you leave her alone and...

**Interviewer (S)**: She had for so many years...

**Interviewee (JL)**: Exactly, you leave her alone. Let her eat her chocolate and chips and you gradually begin to try to introduce something else to her. I think

myself if it was analysed, but you see people don't analyse, you are but I mean most people don't analyse. I think there's an amazing amount of stuff in that film and programme around that analysis, the attitude, look at the way, look at the culture, look how people…

**Interviewer (S)**: Definitely, and I think that as well is that the kind of the individual approach that was taken is what was lacking before in their general education. They're always socially they're kind of on the margins. Then in school they're kind of on the margins and little by little, you know a child just doesn't decide… I know I think you probably said this in one of the programmes, maybe in was is the *School Principles* programme. A child doesn't just decide to not go to school one day, it's a gradual thing and it does happen. So firstly, they're at a disadvantage socially, then they go into school and they're at a disadvantage for one reason or another, maybe they haven't had their breakfast because mam and dad couldn't get out of bed for whatever reason. They're going to school, they're hungry, and they can't concentrate. Then they're getting snappy and then it's like just this constant, you know vicious kind of a cycle and then they're on the margins of school and then they're back on the margins of society and it is definitely this thing…

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah it doesn't happen overnight. I think a school education welfare officer said to me and that's what I was using. He said 'they don't drop out, they fade away'. I thought that was very accurate, gradually. Missing a day, late, missing two days and eventually.

**Interviewer (S)**: Eventually, gone totally.

**Interviewee (JL)**: And the other thing I would have found as well, is that the system, the education system generally speaking makes very little effort to reach out to kids like that, be flexible enough to engage them in some way. Instead it's black or white, or in or out. In the class naturally, and it's not always the teacher's fault, but each individual teacher has some responsibility in this, but you know you keep pace, if you can't keep the pace; out.

**Interviewer (S)**: You're gone.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah and that's where a lot of the pressure starts.

**Interviewer (S)**: I think so yeah, I definitely agree because also you now obviously nowadays and since this style of the education system came about, one is was modelled on and kind of constructed in a way because of the needs of the times. So it was constructed around like, the Industrial Revolution. We need to process the amount of students to do this type of job and X amount of students to do this type of job. And basically it was all very regimented; there wasn't a space for creativity, there was no platform for creative arts...

**Interviewee (JL)**: It was very much driven, like you rightly said by industry and by the way it hasn't changed a whole lot!

**Interviewer (S)**: No, no it hasn't changed a whole lot.

**Interviewee (JL)**:  That's what you're talking about, 'Oh we need more scientists, we need more technology, we need ...' We've the same bloody idea,

it's meeting the demand, it's meeting society's need than educating the individual.

**Interviewer (S)**: Yeah, no and it shouldn't be like that. And like you said the education nowadays is all based on producing this amount of architectures or engineers or teachers or whatever. And yet, you know there's no space for the child themselves to learn about themselves and what it is that they want.

**Interviewee (JL)**: The benefit of the child isn't at the core...

**Interviewer (S)**: There's no individual approach, it's just this mass production. There's a very famous academic about teaching, he was from Brazil and he always said that there's this "banking approach" to teaching or to education. 'I'm the teacher and I have the knowledge and I'm like the full vessel. You're the student and you're the empty vessel and it's my job to deposit in you the knowledge. You don't have to think about the knowledge. You don't have to question it, you just have to memorise it and learn it.' And so there was no development of 'why is it like this?' and this kind of jigsaw things like why is that connected to this? 'It doesn't matter, just learn it off by heart'. I think unfortunately the Irish education system one of the things that would stand out most to me for that style of education would be teaching Irish.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Exactly yeah.

**Interviewer (S)**: You're not taught to speak it, you're taught to answer...

**Interviewee (JL)**: And as a result you didn't develop a love of it or a passion for it.

**Interviewer (S)**: No, no.

**Interviewee (JL)**: You actually developed a hatred for it.

**Interviewer (S)**: Unfortunately, it was inherited by generations upon generations...

**Interviewee (JL)**: And so as a result they lost out rather than gain. And it's all around that theme, of telling you sort of stuff.

**Interviewer (S)**: Definitely yeah 'I'm telling you'. Or if you asked, 'why is it like that?' 'It doesn't matter, just because it is.' But obviously I think fair enough thing to say that not everybody is motivated for the same reasons, but unfortunately the instruction of education is just very much so kind of a blanket approach: this is what you all have to like and you all have to do it and if you don't then you don't fit into this model and so there's not alternative for you. And some kids go to school and they learn very quickly how to learn the system. They might not be particularly interested in maths or Irish or geography but they know they just need to do this to get to this point and for one reason or another they've learned to work the system to their advantage.

**Interviewee (JL)**: That's the philosophy of a lot of those institutes like the Leeson Street....

**Interviewer (S):** The Institute yeah.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Well that's what they do. They get all the information, they put it into you. Go up and regurgitate it at an exam and you get an A. That's no basis that you're an intelligent person. You understand what you're at. You just answer the question, but have you an understanding of it? I mean that's why at least now they're beginning to look at the, I suppose the challenge of trying to prove that people understand what they're saying and why it is as you said, rather than just...

**Interviewer (S)**: Regurgitating it exactly.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah they haven't a clue what it's about. Or as you said 'Why is that?' 'Doesn't matter, just do it.'

**Interviewer (S)**: Yeah just learn it.

**Interviewee (JL)**: That's not education.

**Interviewer (S)**: No it's not at all.

**Interviewee (JL)**: That's indoctrination.

**Interviewer (S)**: Definitely and unfortunately that's what we're coming from. I think we'd learn a lot more from critically analysing things.

**Interviewee (JL)**: And they'd be more enjoyable, which is a big part of it as well.

**Interviewer (S)**: And if there was less emphasis on 'you have this exam to do at this stage and you have this and this, etcetera, etcetera. It should be, and I know

they're trying to change it now with regards to the Junior Cycle, it's more about continuous assessment. But I think also if it was less strict in a sense, if there was more freedom of the student. Ok you're doing history, but if you choose a particular part of history that you are interested in and then you can direct your kind of history lesson and it's catered for you in a sense. **(Time: 47.41)**

**Interviewee (JL)**: Our primary education is far more favouring that and going that direction now. I mean I think our primary education system is soundly based now at the moment and a lot of it now is on experiential stuff; treating children as individuals, there's no competition and no pressure. I think all that sort of stuff is sound, but then when they go to second level a lot of it goes out the window again.

**Interviewer (S)**: Well yeah definitely and I think as well you see, you're, the kids are being educated you know to rhyme off these maths equations and quotes from Shakespeare and how to ask somebody 'Where's the restaurant?' in French or whatever. They're not actually learning how to think about different things and unfortunately it's having definitely a very negative effect. I had a question that I wanted to ask you…oh yeah. So obviously there's more pressure on kids nowadays after they leave school whether they go straight into employment or they take a third-level route or a PLC or they go travelling abroad, but at one stage we'd like to think the majority of people who've been through the education system find jobs. And like you said the Irish education system has been for years and years and years very good at teaching people how to find jobs but the industry is changing nowadays and your employer or business don't

only want you to have an A in Maths, a B in History and a C in whatever. They also want you to be able to critically think about something and come up with innovative ideas and creativity and yet if we're not teaching kids how to think like that then how are they supposed to survive in a business?

**Interviewee (JL)**: Well I was at a summer school out in Meath two years ago and there was a professor from Maynooth there and he was talking on that very subject. And he said at the end 'What the modern demand of students leaving second and third level education today is to think outside the box.' And he said, 'How do we educate them? In a box!' so how he hell do you expect them to think outside the box when we actually educate them in a box? And I think our primary education is beginning to realise that and so the kids have more flexibility and it's more experiential and it's more dialogue rather than instruction. Like in my day it was total instruction, absolutely. 'Sit down, *dún do bheál*, and listen.' And as you said 'I'll tell you and you just…' But at least nowadays there's more interaction. I suppose the other thing, just as a little diversion from that, you said about educating people to make a living and our education does for those that stay in it. I suppose the real challenge is around the significant number of kids. I think they're significant because there's thousands of them that drop out and they are you know, most of those kids that I'm talking about, their futures are jobless. Their chances of getting long-term, permanent employment are almost zero. And I think it's getting worse Shauna rather than better because of the fact that nowadays most jobs are technical, the demands by employers, the standards are higher. The days of labourers, the days

of the non-thinker, that you know just go in and do the job, a storeman and down at the docks and all that, they're all gone. Even on building sites most people today, mixing cement is about technology and all that. So the opportunities for people who don't have a broad base of skills are more and more limited, which means that those who drop out of education which are very significant in disadvantaged areas are going to continue to be disadvantaged and that's where I think the real challenge is, to try to challenge that. And I suppose that takes a lot of effort and resources in the short term, but the longer term benefits are immense! Like if you change one child, you've changed a future generation.

**Interviewer (S)**: Oh yeah without a doubt and I definitely agree with that because for me like, my mam left school when she finished her Inter Cert (the Junior Cert at that stage) and she got a job and she's been very lucky, she's always worked. She went back to college when we were in maybe 6$^{th}$ class or I was just about to start secondary school. She went back to do a FÁS course in Payroll and so she's an Account manager and stuff now and she's all brilliant.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Fantastic yeah.

**Interviewer (S)**: But because she had such a, she knew in 15 or 20 years education in the way forward, if my kids one don't finish school, they're going to find it very hard to find something and for me like my mam obviously always me and I always had that routine of: do your homework, you do that then you can relax. And that's just the way it was. I was the first one in my family then

to go to third level. And so yeah for me definitely I know that my whole situation has changed and if and when I ever have kids then it'll totally change their situation as well.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Oh yeah absolutely.

**Interviewer (S)**: Without a doubt. And even with my nieces and nephews if my sister ever decides to have kids. There's this kind of idea of there is value in education. It does, it opens so many doors and jobs, but then unfortunately you have the dead-end in education. You have these poor people who have PhDs who are working in McDonald's which is totally shocking altogether.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah I know, but I suppose like again it's like everything else Shauna, I mean as you know well, you know part of it is the actual paper qualification. A lot of it as well is what you get out of it yourself as a person. Because at the end of the day, a piece of paper is a piece of paper and a qualification is brilliant, but I would say unless you really question, learn, inform yourself and develop around your learning and your studies, then that qualification it doesn't really matter then whether you get a job is whatever our specialist subject is, you will get a job because of your brain development and your insight. Some people again it's like the Leaving Cert. They go through the whole system and they don't benefit, they haven't grown themselves. Of course the whole idea for me is that it's again the Masters or the Phd is the catalyst for allowing the person to grow and to develop themselves as people and to benefit from…. I mean I remember interviewing a fella one time and he did some sort of

a Science degree in Limerick and we were interviewing for the prison service for something and I said about the degree, 'Well now what benefits have you got out of the degree?' and he said 'to tell you the truth; none.' Four years in the university in Limerick and he comes in and says he's got nothing. Like that was an example like 'What are you saying?' You obviously don't realise that you spent four years and you have got nothing out of it.

**Interviewer (S)**: Yeah I think though it's also a thing of like getting people to think reflectively on what they've gone through. Ok yeah I have a degree in Science, but what other things have I learned? Time management, all of that stuff.

**Interviewee (JL)**: In the process. Sure he had to learn a pile of stuff. Just people don't realise.

**Interviewer (S)**: A pile of stuff, but not only academic.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah not only academic, not academic at all. The benefits he got out of it and the people he met and all the insights that he got or should have got, as you said if the person had their mind open and tuned in.

**Interviewer (S)**: Well that could've been a perfect example of somebody who's gone through the system, learned to work the system to their advantage and yet they didn't take from it what they could have.

**Interviewee (JL)**: They didn't get the full potential I suppose that's the main thing.

**Interviewer (S)**: Definitely. How are you doing on time, ok? Can I ask you a few more?

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah of course, Shauna.

**Interviewer (S)**: You've said before that if you spend on early intervention, you'll save on the consequences later. I think that this statement can be applied to lots of different multiple scenarios if we consider its application to promote civic participation or civic engagement in some way and using the Arts as this kind of, like you said 'catalyst' or vehicle to educate the population about social issues like basic everyday-type education, nutrition and stuff like this. Do you think it would be?

**Interviewee (JL)**: Yeah I'm absolutely certain again I think, I mean we know from experience that that whole area of drama, painting, all that sort of thing. It is a fantastic communication facility as well. And it can, some of our greatest messages have come from drama or come from paintings or whatever it would be. So of course I believe that if I was in charge, I would be saying that it's one of the most neglected areas of all in Ireland are the creative arts. We just haven't got tuned in at all to their value, to their potential and certainly in areas where there's very little activity, it's one of the things that I'm absolutely certain has unlimited potential. But like in Mountjoy, just to back you up really on what you're saying, like in Mountjoy we always tried to, when we were selecting a drama, the particular drama, always try to select one that A they enjoyed, B had meaning. Like we did the *Risen People*, *The Lonesome West* they

were all some of John B. Keane's, they were all based on real stuff, around how people, like *The Field*. A real fantastic piece of education, because it's all about the stupidity of people and land and how they're obsessed with it and the lack of respect for people. All those plays that we did, the one thing that we didn't want to do was to have prisoners performing in parts that they were familiar with themselves. The whole idea was to have them doing doctors or doing teachers or someone you know so they'd identify with a completely different personality...

**Interviewer (S)**: Give them somebody else's perspective.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Exactly and try to study; what does a doctor do? What does a farmer do? How do they think? An the whole idea was you took them out of their own comfort zone and put them into someone else's shoes so that they... and that's what I, where I see the great value of drama and that sort of stuff, because it allows people or it helps people to get an insight into how the farmer...

**Interviewer (S)**: Yeah. There's another part of what I'm doing is obviously it's connected to performing arts and stuff. There's a fella called Augusto Boal and he's from Brazil as well and he does like a theatre thing whereby he had a play let's say 'The Field', and he had typical people from cities participating in it and he would let them do the monologue or the dialogue or a scene in the play and then he would ask the audience to participate. 'Well what would you have said in this particular situation?', to try and constantly think of the different possible consequences of one particular action. And I think for them, he usually

worked with peasant farmers and so this kind of allowed the peasant farmers to see, one 'OK this is where we are now in society or this is our place in economic terms and if we do this, it could have this end, if we do that it could have that end.' And what actually happened was when they changed the play with their own personal interpretation of what should have happened or what could happen, a lot of the things over time changed the society themselves and new laws were enacted to not allow these things to happen again that were discussed in plays. And I think that's something brilliant.

**Interviewee (JL)**: I'm absolutely convinced, you know that they have unlimited potential for all sorts of social classes and the educated and the non-educated. You don't have to be educated, in that sense, because it is about experience and sharing and dialogue, learning and observing. So there's a whole lot of , the same way that I'm convinced that music and sport, they're all absolutely invaluable facilities for...

**Interviewer (S)**: They're all life lessons and I mean people who've been in Mountjoy or the socially disadvantaged areas, their education, they've all had an education in the sense that their education or their school was on the streets or their family situation. And they have just as much learned about whatever that particular situation is as anybody from, I don't know, one of the more affluent areas.

**Interviewee (JL)**: I always said that in some ways those kids are way more advanced for being streetwise and then they lack. But then again in terms of

have they learned. They learned to survive. They're survivors and they have to be. They're very cunning and sharp and that's all very much based on what their life has brought them. If they were brought up in a different area, they'd be quite different people.

**Interviewer (S)**: Definitely, but like that's the thing as well. They've grown up in more difficult areas so they've been forced to think outside the box in order for them to survive, whereas someone who's from more sheltered, they're just regimented 'Oh I'll do my maths homework, I'll do this, I'll do that and they wouldn't think of the possible different ways of doing different things. So I definitely think that both situations can learn from each other. It shouldn't just be all academic and there certainly shouldn't be no academic either, but if there was more of a mixture, you know if the Arts had a bit more of a footing in education, if it wasn't all so academic.

**Interviewee (JL)**: Well there's a lot of good work going on at the minute, I'm aware of a lot of work going on in different groups, teachers in particular trying to promote that whole artistic thing in primary education and eh….but the two awards now in the last year it's fantastic to see primary school kids now all being introduced and encouraged to participate in drama and creative arts and I think that that's a good sign. But I mean it is a battle and they would tell you themselves it is a battle to get that sort of recognition into the system, where it's integrated into the system as a normal part of the system and not on the periphery or in addition.

**Interviewer (S)**: Yeah, I volunteer with *Fighting Words* there just beside Croke Park and it's a creative writing space. Now it's only optional and they kind of just have daytrips of different primary and secondary school kids who come in and they're trying to get it introduced in some way kind of more mainstream where they're trying to educate primary or secondary school teachers to use the Arts in their English language class in particular. It was founded by Sean Love and Roddy Doyle. It's brilliant; it's such a good programme. Kids come in in the morning, let's say the primary kids. They come in in the morning and they have an artist or drawer and they have a facilitator and they have a typist and they're asked 'OK we need two main characters for the story so think of one, they all give different ideas. So there are different options up on the screen. 'Close your eyes, who do you want?' OK so you can't see who's voting for whom, so there's no kind of like pressure. OK so we'll pick the fluffy green monster that wears the tutu. And they can be as creative as they want. Then they think of a best friend. The protagonist has a dream in life. What's the dream? He wants to perform in the Russian Ballet in his tutu, he fuzzy green monster. What's his ultimate fear? He only has one foot or whatever so he can't do the twirls. But it just opens their mind, there are endless possibilities to different things. You give them the first half of the story, you print it all up for them as they're interacting they have an artist drawing the fluffy green monster, pink tutu, one leg, whatever and then they're told 'OK individually now go and try and finish the story'. And the possibilities are endless, the imagination that they have is ridiculous, but that's all learning. Decision making: what type of monster are we

going to have? What's their ambition? What can they do? What can they not do? And all of these little, little things, their confidence just grows so much within that space of an hour and yet they don't have anything like that in school, they have to be taken out of school in order to have things like that and it should really be in mainstream, of course.

**Interviewee (JL)**: That's exactly it; of course it should yeah, absolutely.

**Interviewer (S)**: Definitely.

<p align="center">~End interview~</p>