Expansive Other-Regarding Virtues and Civic Excellence

T. Ryan Byerly; t.r.byerly@sheffield.ac.uk; corresponding author. Byerly is Senior Lecturer in the Philosophy Department at the University of Sheffield. His research focuses on virtue theory and philosophy of religion. His most recent books in these areas are Intellectual Dependability: A Virtue Theory of the Epistemic and Educational Ideal (2021) and Putting Others First: The Christian Ideal of Others-Centeredness (2019), both with Routledge Press.

Megan Haggard; mhaggard@fmarion.edu. Haggard is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Francis Marion University. Her research focuses on virtue development, influence of religion on socio-political beliefs and behaviors, and the role of virtue in everyday life. She has contributed to volumes regarding the psychological understanding of humility and curiosity.

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Abstract: This paper is concerned with the civic significance and cultivation of three constructs that involve different ways of having an expansive and virtuous concern for others. Identification with all humanity involves caring for an expansive domain of others, identifying with humanity generally and not just with one's ingroup. Others-centeredness involves caring about others to an expansive extent, putting others' interests ahead of one's own. Last, the virtues of intellectual dependability involve caring for an expansive range of others' goods, including their intellectual goods. Our aims are to explain the nature of these traits in further detail, to present evidence of their relationship to certain kinds of civic engagement, and to identify strategies for cultivating them and educating for them.

Keywords: identification with all humanity; intellectual virtue; civic engagement; others-centeredness; altruism; civic education

Introduction

It seems intuitive that people who have an expansive and virtuous concern for others would be more civically active and would promote better outcomes for their groups. We have set out to test more specific versions of this basic hypothesis empirically by attending to the civic significance of three constructs that **involve** different ways of having an expansive and virtuous concern for others. In the sections that follow, we explain the basic nature of each of these constructs and describe the research we and others have done on them, including our own recent work focused on their civic significance. We also attend to questions about the relationship between these traits and educational attainment, and discuss suggestions for cultivating them in oneself or inculcating them in others as part of formal civic education. **In doing so, our primary aims are to articulate the nature of this important group of virtuous traits, to demonstrate conceptual and empirical relationships between them and some forms of civic engagement, and to offer informed strategies about how they can be developed, particularly in educational settings.**

Identification with All Humanity

First, expansive concern for others can be influenced by whom an individual considers to be worthy of their concern. Typically, human biases can narrow expansive concern to one's ingroups (e.g., family, friends, similar others). Indeed, even a small commonality between people, such as sharing a birthday (Finch and Cialdini 1989) or favorite sporting team (Goldie and Wolfson 2014), can result in more positive feelings toward them and increased self-esteem for the individual. However, this also creates outgroups, or others with which an individual does not share a clear commonality; these groups are often met with increased disdain and more negative feelings.

To overcome these innate biases, identification with all humanity **incorporates the** expansive idea that all human beings are considered part of one's ingroup (McFarland et al 2012). Instead of leaving out unlike others, an individual with strong identification with all humanity would see all humans as part of the human family. This is different from simple perspective-taking and extends the circle of care and concern beyond one's family and nation to include all others. This view is not novel; the Stoic Hierocles describes how expanding one's circle of concern from the self, to near family, to extended family, to fellow citizens/tribe-members, finally culminating in the inclusion of the entire human race as equal to the others, is the natural development of humans' instinctive other-concern[1]. In alignment with this, psychologists developed identification with all humanity to encompass the ideals of Maslow's self-actualized individuals and Adler's concept of mature social interest (McFarland et al 2012). Identification with all humanity is more than a lack of prejudice and ethnocentrism; it **involves** a true interest in the welfare of others all over the world.

McFarland and colleagues (2006; 2012) developed a measure to capture the strength of an individual's identification with all humanity and subsequently investigated connections with related attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Individuals high in identification with all humanity (as opposed to identification with people in my community or people in my country) value human rights, display greater knowledge of global issues, avoid logical missteps in issues involving outgroups, and donate money to international charities. They are also less ethnocentric, prejudiced, and less likely to use ingroup/outgroup distinctions to evaluate others' worth and dignity.

Though previous research has linked identification with all humanity with different prosocial behaviors, global awareness, and lack of prejudice or ethnocentrism **(McFarland 2016)**, our own investigations have examined the relationship between identification with all humanity and **civic engagement [REFERENCE REMOVED]**. **We collected responses to an online questionnaire from 509 participants, asking them to complete the identification with all humanity measure and to answer a series of questions about their civic participation derived from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE; Lopez et al 2006), Current Population Survey (United States Bureau of the Census, 2013), and Pew's Survey of Activism in the Social Media Age (Anderson et al 2018).** Our results indicate that individuals with higher levels of identification with all humanity were significantly more likely to engage civically in a variety of ways: virtual behaviors, by sharing and promoting information related to voting and being politically active online; democratic behaviors, by voting, participating in protests, contacting elected officials, and signing petitions; and interpersonal behaviors, by volunteering, providing help to neighbors, and spending time with people from a different background from them. These relationships between identification with all humanity and these behaviours ranged from small to moderate, and indicate that identification with all humanity is associated with building relationships and actively participating in

[1] See *The Morality of Happiness* by Julia Annas (1993) for further description of the Stoics' views of other-concern and its development (pages 267-270).

a democracy. In terms of uniquely predicting these outcomes, identification with all humanity contributed more than the the **five-factor personality facet of** altruism **(Goldberg et al 2006)** to both virtual behaviors and interpersonal behaviors.

There are several avenues to improve individuals' identification with all humanity, despite the lack of direct investigation into how to develop it. Sparkman and Hamer (2020) detail that contact with members of other cultures and experiences within that culture decrease negative feelings toward outgroups and increase humanitarian helping through identification with all humanity. Along with experiences, either in-person or virtually, with diverse others, McFarland (2016) also suggests that teaching about ordinary individuals who have shown immense identification with all humanity, such as individuals who hid Jews during the Holocaust in Germany, should increase the likelihood to see all others as ingroup members. There is also evidence that there is **a widely held** implicit belief that the most moral and most mature individuals exhibit a strong identification with all humanity (McFarland and Brown 2008).

Drawing on this, we have three suggestions to cultivate identification with all humanity, all of which involve exposure to different others. First, positive interactions with others from diverse backgrounds and experiences can help to engage individuals with life experiences and viewpoints unlike their own. This should expand individuals' awareness and understanding of the perspectives of others while also promoting shared humanity. Second, learners can be given explicit teaching about the commonalities shared by all humans (e.g. we all live on the same planet, we all smile in the same language) and about those who have worked to protect others who are different from them. Practicing finding similarities instead of differences should result in a more reflective view of others as family and help to dispel ethnocentrism and prejudice. Third, educators can encourage introspection and discussion about moral individuals and how they view others unlike them. By taking advantage of the implicit association between morally mature individuals and increased identification with all humanity that is present, an individual can understand and imitate those who exemplify caring for all humans equally. They can also confront their own obstacles to caring for all equally.

Others-Centeredness

A second trait that involves an expansive concern for others is others-centeredness. This is a tendency to prioritize promoting others' interests over one's own, based on valuing others and oneself equally while also valuing interpersonal unions (Byerly, Hill and Edwards forthcoming). Others-centeredness **involves** expansive concern for others in the sense that it involves caring about others' interests to an expansive **degree**, tending to put others' interests ahead of one's own. The others-centered person characteristically puts others' interests ahead of their own because they value others' interests just as much as their own, but they also recognize that by promoting others' interests they stand a better chance of promoting valuable relationships between themselves and others than when they instead promote their own interests.

Research on others-centeredness can be traced most clearly in the contemporary literature to a book and series of articles by T. Ryan Byerly and his collaborators.[2] In these texts, Byerly identifies an ideal that seems to be presented within the Christian tradition, in texts such as Philippians 2:3—"Do nothing out of selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind consider others more important than yourselves". Byerly argues that others-centeredness as conceptualised

[2] The book is (Byerly 2019); the articles (Byerly 2014; Byerly and Byerly 2016).

above can make good sense of what such passages are recommending to readers, and he builds a philosophical case for the normative value of others-centeredness based on its conduciveness to facilitating interpersonal unions. While others-centeredness finds its clearest articulation in these works, it is important to note that similar ideals have been identified by other researchers. Both Michael Austin (2018) and Jennifer Cole Wright and colleagues (Wright et al, 2018) have suggested that tendencies to prioritize others' interests are part of what is involved in the virtue of humility. We will come back to the work of Wright and colleagues on "high other-focus" below.

More recent research on others-centeredness has focused on investigating the trait empirically. Byerly, Hill, and Edwards (forthcoming) developed a self-report measure of others-centeredness and examined its relationship to a range of personality features and behaviors. They found that more others-centered individuals were also more empathetic, altruistic, agreeable, kind, fair, and forgiving. They also are more satisfied with their lives, experience greater meaning in their lives, and are better able to cope with stress. We have also found this relationship between others-centeredness and life satisfaction in our own work in progress **described below**, which has observed that others-centeredness is positively correlated with honesty **(Peterson and Seligman 2004)**, love of learning **(Haggard et al 2018), and identification with all humanity** as well.

Beyond these correlates with other features of personality, others-centeredness also predicts specific behaviors. Byerly, Hill, and Edwards told participants that they had five $2 bills to divide between themselves and another participant, selecting five intentionally so that participants could not divide the bills evenly but must favor either themselves or the other participant. Others-centredness successfully predicted whether participants would give more $2 bills to the other person.

Others-centeredness is also noteworthy for what it lacks. In particular, it lacks relationships with neuroticism, stress, and lack of self-differentiation. This is important, because other previously studied tendencies that involve prioritizing others' interests over one's own do have relationships to these features. This is true of unmitigated communion (Helgeson and Fritz 1998)—a trait first identified because of its potential to explain sex differentials in depression, **which involves caring for others at the expense of oneself, and becoming overly involved in others' problems**—and high other-focus, the other-oriented tendency that Wright and colleagues have studied (Wright et al 2018). Byerly, Hill, and Edwards found that when controlling for others-centeredness, both unmitigated communion and high other-focus were related to these other negative variables, and lacked positive relationships to life satisfaction and presence of meaning in life. Thus, it may seem that others-centeredness retains the benefits associated with tendencies that involve prioritizing others without their detriments.

In our own work we are examining the civic significance of others-centeredness in more detail. **Using the same dataset described in Section 1**, we have found that more others-centered individuals are more likely to engage in community-building activities such as volunteering and spending time with a person from a different background than their own. Others-centered people are also more likely to engage with political information by reading, watching, or listening to political or social news and following political figures online. They also actively share political and social news by posting links to it in their social media use and by liking and promoting what others' share. They are more likely to take overt political actions like voting in local elections, belonging to a political or social organisation, attending a public meeting, participating in a protest or demonstration, and signing a petition. And, they are more likely to encourage others to vote and take other forms of political action. While these effects were generally small, they suggest that others-centeredness is relevant to a wide range of civically-significant behaviors. It is also noteworthy that others-

centeredness makes a significant contribution to some of these activities, such as attending a public meeting or encouraging others to vote or take political action, beyond the contribution made by altruism, **having small but significant semi-partial correlations with these activities when controlling for altruism.**

Our data does not indicate a significant relationship between others-centeredness and educational attainment. Byerly, Hill, and Edwards's data likewise does not indicate a significant relationship between these variables. Thus, it would seem that formal educational attainment may not have a significant influence on others-centeredness, or vice-versa. This does not imply, however, that others-centeredness cannot be taught or cultivated. While we are only beginning to directly explore the cultivation of others-centeredness in our own research, there are some existing research findings we can point to here which may indirectly indicate two effective strategies for cultivating others-centeredness.

Both of the suggestions we will offer concern the feature of others-centeredness highlighted above which involves valuing interpersonal unions. These unions, recall, are the various valuable ways in which one person can be united to another, such as through cooperation, friendship, or simply through one person's acknowledging and listening to or intending to benefit another. There are two psychological findings relevant to these unions which we suggest may provide a fulcrum for inculcating others-centeredness in oneself or others. First, psychological research indicates that people tend to systematically underestimate the value of interpersonal unions. For instance, we misjudge the impact that small acts of kindness will have on both others and ourselves (Kumar and Epley 2020). We likewise think that speaking kindly to a stranger won't matter to us—but it does (Epley and Shroeder 2014). Engaging in courses of action that promote interpersonal unions thus tends to have a more positive impact for ourselves and others than we think it will. The second finding is more directly related to the distinctively others-centered behavior of putting others' interests first, acting to benefit others in some way rather than to benefit ourselves in such a way. It is that people tend to experience greater happiness themselves when they act this way. This finding has been confirmed using a variety of experimental designs (e.g., Dunn et al 2008; Nelson et al 2016), and researchers have recently confirmed that the explanation for the finding is that when people act to benefit others they tend to experience greater satisfaction of their needs for relatedness than when they act to benefit themselves (Titova and Sheldon 2022). To put these two findings together, what we see is that people tend to underestimate the value of interpersonal unions in general, and when they act to promote others' interests rather than their own they experience greater happiness themselves than when they act to promote their own interests rather than others'.

On the basis of these findings, we offer two recommendations for cultivating others-centeredness. First, others-centeredness might be cultivated in part through learning about the preceding facts. Specifically, it may help people to overcome disinclinations toward acting in accordance with others-centeredness if their potential misunderstandings about the value of interpersonal unions can be corrected—if they learn that they themselves may be liable to a tendency to undervalue these unions. Secondly, and complementarily, it may help to cultivate others-centeredness if people experience the value of promoting interpersonal unions, especially through others-centered behavior. **As Aristotle suggests is true with the development of moral virtues in general (see *Nichomachean Ethics*, *II.1*),** cultivating others-centeredness may be promoted through engaging in activities characteristic of the trait—even through planning ahead to put oneself in a position where one intends to act to benefit another instead of oneself. By doing so, one may move closer toward developing others-centeredness not just because one has gained

practice in performing such actions, but because one may have learned experientially through performing them that doing so is a significant source of happiness for oneself and others.

The Virtues of Intellectual Dependability

A final group of traits that involve an expansive concern for others are the virtues of intellectual dependability. This is a group of five virtues that involve a distinctive other-regarding concern to value and promote epistemic goods, such as knowledge and understanding, for others (Byerly 2021). They **involve** an expansive concern for others in the sense that they involve concern for an expansive range of others' goods, focusing specifically on others' epistemic goods. The five virtues of intellectual dependability are intellectual benevolence, intellectual transparency, communicative clarity, audience sensitivity, and epistemic guidance.

Research on these virtues of intellectual dependability represents a novel turn of attention in recent virtue epistemology. While there has been a remarkable surge of interest among epistemologists in analysing specific intellectual virtues, **comparatively miniscule** attention has been given to distinctively other-regarding virtues which focus primarily on promoting others' epistemic goods, despite arguments from some authors that such attention was sorely needed (Kawall 2002).

Byerly's (2021) philosophical work offers an analysis of these five virtues and makes a case that we should aim to help learners grow in these virtues through formal education. Briefly, intellectual benevolence is a foundational and refined motivation to value and promote epistemic goods for others. Intellectual transparency is a tendency to faithfully share one's perspective with others out of intellectually benevolent motives. Communicative clarity is a tendency to remove or resolve ambiguities from one's communications so that others can understand one's meaning. Audience sensitivity is a tendency to regulate one's communications to others in light of one's grasp of the distinctive features of their perspectives, so as to promote their epistemic goods. And, epistemic guidance is a tendency to help others navigate the risks and benefits of inquiry.

Byerly argues that educating for these virtues is justified, because given **how these virtues are conceptualized** doing so is **likely to be** conducive toward achieving a variety of other ends that are thought to be justified aims of education, and it is not a problematic means to promoting these ends. Educating for intellectual dependability is, **Byerly hypothesizes**, conducive to educating for intellectual virtue, critical thinking skills, and apprenticeship into traditions of inquiry. Students who learn to be intellectually dependable are likely to be thereby enabled to more effectively engage in intellectual cooperation, to form more satisfying interpersonal relationships, to contribute effectively to society through their paid and volunteer work, and to engage civically. In terms of potential drawbacks, educating students to be intellectually dependable does not require violating their autonomy; indeed, properly understood, it may enhance it.

Our own recent work has begun to test some of these hypotheses empirically, with a particular focus being on the civic significance of the virtues of intellectual dependability **[REFERENCES REMOVED]**. **We began by developing self-report measures of these five virtues through the use of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. Then, using the same sample discussed in Section 1, we examined the relationships between our newly developed measures and various personality features and self-reported behaviors**. We found that the virtues of intellectual dependability are positively related to a number of more self-regarding intellectual virtues, such as the love of learning, perspective-taking **(Davis 1983)**, and open-minded thinking **(Baron 2019)**. They are also positively related to other-oriented features of personality that are not

concerned specifically with epistemic goods, such as altruism, others-centeredness **and identification with all humanity**. People who are more intellectually dependable also tend to withhold their knowledge **(Lin & Huang 2010)** from others less, and they exhibit lower levels of Machiavellian tendencies **(Monaghan et al 2020)** to manipulate others for their own ends. And, intellectually dependable people are more satisfied with their lives than their counterparts.

In terms of specific behaviours, we have found that intellectually dependable people are more likely to engage in a wide variety of civic activities that promote community building and political action. Intellectually dependable people are more likely to volunteer for roles as coaches, mentors, teachers, or board members. They are more likely to read about social and political issues in the news, follow politicians on social media, and share their own views and others' views publicly. They also take more active steps like attending protests and public meetings and signing petitions. And they are more likely to vote in local elections than their counterparts and to encourage others to vote and take political action. It should be noted that when it comes to many of these variables, the virtues of intellectual dependability explain additional variance beyond what is explained by other features such as love of learning or honesty, **as demonstrated through the use of multiple regressions [REFERENCE REMOVED].**

Unlike others-centeredness, **our data does indicate that there are** positive relationships between **some of** the virtues of intellectual dependability and educational attainment. **Participants' level of education is positively related to intellectual transparency and audience sensitivity**. These relationships are perhaps more notable when we consider that educational attainment was not related to the self-regarding intellectual virtues of love of learning or open-minded thinking in our sample, contrary to what might have been expected. Yet, the relationship between education level and **these** virtues of intellectual dependability was only small, and no significant relationship was found for three of the five virtues. This may suggest that while education can make a difference for intellectual dependability, there may be room for it to exert a stronger influence if it is reconfigured explicitly to do so. This suggestion may be an even more pressing one to consider given the arguments outlined above in favor of educating for intellectual dependability, combined with the fact that the most widely accepted epistemic aims for education incorporate only self-regarding aims (Siegel 2017).

We conclude this section with some suggestions about how to educate for these virtues of intellectual dependability. Again, as with our research on others-centeredness, this is a topic we are only beginning to investigate directly. However, in this area there is an emerging consensus about at least some of the basic kinds of strategies that can be implemented to cultivate intellectual virtues in general—including in formal educational settings **(cf. Baehr 2021).** We might expect that these general strategies could be used for the purpose of teaching the virtues of intellectual dependability as much as for other intellectual virtues.

The strategies we have in mind include direct instruction, practice identifying virtuous and vicious behavior, exposure to exemplars, skill-based practice exercises, and virtue-based feedback. Directly learning a bit about the nature of intellectual benevolence, intellectual transparency, communicative clarity, audience sensitivity, and epistemic guidance, together with their opposing vices, can help to reduce one's cognitive load when encountering virtue-relevant situations, providing aspirants with schemas through which they can more easily evaluate and respond to their situations. Through practicing evaluating vignettes presenting behaviors characteristic of the virtues or their vices, learners gain further facility with the concepts they are learning, and come to appreciate the broad range of circumstances to which these traits are relevant. Exposure to exemplars can concretise the virtues for the learner, and can also stir their affections and motivate

them toward virtue acquisition if they experience admiration for the virtuous. Practice exercises are again absolutely central. Learners can make plans to act in accordance with these virtues, and then check in on how well they followed through. They can also engage in specific tasks that require them to, for example, share information well, or to not overstate their own positions, such as the hidden profile task (Bowman and Wittenbaum 2012) or the overclaiming task (Paulhus et al 2003), which can provide them with a kind of behavioral benchmark for some of their virtue-relevant conduct. And they can seek out feedback from trusted and knowledgeable others who have observed them, especially in intellectually demanding settings. If the arguments outlined above regarding the value of educating for intellectual dependability are sound, then there is all the more reason to consider pursuing strategies such as these that may enable greater acquisition of intellectual dependability during formative years in education.

Expansive Other-Regarding Virtues and Civic Education

We have offered some general suggestions above about how identification with all humanity, others-centeredness, and the virtues of intellectual dependability might be cultivated in oneself or inculcated in others. But, one might wonder how these strategies could be integrated specifically into the civic education of students in formal educational contexts. We will offer some brief remarks, focusing on the primary and secondary educational levels.

One important place to begin is by noting that while these virtues may seem exotic—we've described them as expansive, after all—they nonetheless each reflect placing a high premium on values that are already foundational within education. Among the key values that structure the educational enterprise are inclusiveness, participation, and cooperation. Educational institutions strive to ensure that each student has a fair chance to capitalise on educational opportunities; they endeavor to encourage students to each make contributions to learning, presenting and expressing their knowledge to others; and they cannot achieve their aims unless students and teachers cooperate in the learning process. As we have seen above, these values are closely associated with the virtues we have discussed. Specifically, identification with all humanity is closely tied to the value of inclusiveness, the virtues of intellectual dependability to participation, and others-centeredness to valuing cooperation. Inculcating these values in students, or at least teaching students to adopt an ethos that accords with these values in the school setting, is often viewed as an early stage of civic education, insofar as enculturating such values contributes to students' preparedness for civic life (Crittenden and Levine 2018). Additionally, explicit instructional methods that utilize cooperation for learning have demonstrated positive outcomes such as increased affective empathy and peer relatedness and decreased bullying (Van Ryzin and Roseth, 2019). Thus, there is a way in which the very process of education, if carried out well, will demand that students are incentivised from an early age to behave to some extent in accordance with values central to the virtues identified here.

There are also further steps that can be taken to impart the expansive other-regarding virtues to students as part of more advanced civic education curricula. Many authors have championed the importance of incorporating active engagement with their communities and the wider world as a pivotal aspect of students' civic education. Whether this learning is through service projects (Bruner 1961), wider forms of civic participation (Levinson 2012), or local participation in school governance (Dewey 1916), it can be conducted in a way that presents opportunities for helping students to grow toward our focal virtues. Moreover, prior findings suggest that such active engagement practices in civic education result in higher later political engagement across socio-economic statuses and

geographical areas in Belgium and the United States; additionally, these educational practices can counteract a lack of family-based education in political engagement (Neundorf et al 2016).

In fact, we would suggest that certain kinds of service or civic action projects can be conducted in a way that would encourage students to develop all three of our focal constructs. This may be true especially of cases in which students are required to collaborate together to identify, develop, and implement creative strategies for addressing concerns of communities beyond their own. Such an exercise could prompt students to engage with and spend time with others in a community beyond their own—something we saw to be important for cultivating identification with all humanity. It could also prompt them to creatively contribute to group deliberative processes—a kind of activity characteristic of the virtues of intellectual dependability. And, they may reap the reward of experiencing unions with both fellow students, their school staff, and the community whose concerns they are addressing, which may facilitate their development of others-centeredness.

Active, practice-based learning of this sort can of course be combined with more formal instruction about the virtues as well in the manner identified above. This can provide students with an opportunity for more critical reflection about their active learning experiences, as well as affording them an opportunity to interrogate for themselves the value of virtues they may be on their way toward cultivating. Some authors have argued that an approach to civic education which combines more active elements with opportunities for reflection in this way is the most effective approach to civic education (Damon 2001), and this may be true as well when it comes to civic education that includes aiming to impart expansively other-regarding virtues.

Conclusion

Identification with all humanity, others-centeredness, and the virtues of intellectual dependability **are all traits that involve having** an expansive regard for others, **but each in their own way**. The person high in identification with all humanity tends to regard all human others as part of their ingroup, bringing them within their scope of concern. The person high in others-centeredness tends to put others' interests ahead of their own interests. And, the person high in the virtues of intellectual dependability tends to care virtuously for others' epistemic goods in particular, helping them gain knowledge and understanding. Previous research has shown that identification with all humanity and others-centeredness relate to certain positive variables, though this research has focused on different variables in each case. Empirical research on the virtues of intellectual dependability is entirely new. Our recent work has focused on the civic significance of these traits, and has found positive relationships between all three and different kinds of civic engagement. While the topic of how these traits might be cultivated or taught is not yet well-explored, we have offered some suggestions here about how this might be done, based on extant findings, and have attempted to highlight ways in which these suggestions might be implemented as part of formal civic education curricula.

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