

Supporting Children to Cooperate, Connect, and Civically Engage in a Diverse Society

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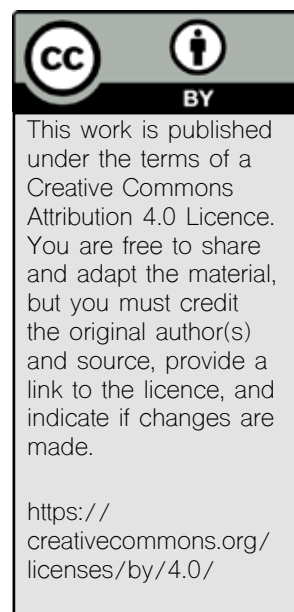
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Abstract

This paper describes a pilot project that combined media education and multicultural education goals and strategies to encourage children (ages 10-11) to cooperate, connect, and civically engage in a diverse society. The intervention was a three hour long workshop that was implemented with three groups of 20 children each in two elementary schools in the Czech Republic. The goals were based on theoretical frameworks and on previous research findings into children's ideas about diversity and their experience with media. The specific strategies were slightly modified during the study in response to children's participation and their comments on a reflective questionnaire administered at the end of each session. Overall, children readily participated in the activities, and many wished that the sessions were longer or more frequent. They particularly appreciated the chance to talk about concerns that were important to them. Their conversations and comments suggest that several of the children were engaged in, or at least thinking about, the three goals of the project. These findings support the idea that the synthesis of media and multicultural education has the potential to encourage children's cooperation, connection and civic engagement. This article concludes with suggestions for how these activities could be enhanced and extended to further promote these goals.

Keywords: children, diversity, media, civic engagement, education, qualitative research



Children learning in a diverse world

As children learn about people, they notice particular attributes that are perceptually salient such as gender, race, and language and use them to categorise people into groups (Bigler & Liben, 2007). Through this process they engage in meaning making as they interpret the information and attitudes that prevail in their families, communities, and larger social contexts. The formation of categories often leads to essentialist thinking and assumptions that all members of a specific group share the same values and engage in similar behaviors. These beliefs often embody common stereotypes that, in turn, reflect power differentials in the society and serve to justify and preserve the status quo (Mahaingham, 2007) and in-group preferences (Bigler & Liben, 2007; Patterson & Bigler, 2006).

These perceptions and beliefs about the relative value of different racial groups are also reflected in attitudes toward poor people, women/girls, individuals with disabilities, and other marginalised groups. Furthermore, they underlie virtually all societal values and institutions. For example, climate change is a crisis that is affecting the whole world. However, the leaders of the wealthy, primarily white, nations have failed to adequately respond, because they choose to support the status quo and ignore the plight of poor communities and countries that are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Institutions, such as schools, businesses, and government also reflect these biases, as is evident in the unequal distribution of resources across neighborhoods and schools, and employment practices that privilege certain groups over others. These views also affect interpersonal relationships as can be seen in friendship patterns and power differentials in schools, workplaces, and public spaces.

Young children tend to organise information in broad categories that are rigid and dichotomous. As they get older, children are better able to understand that similarities and differences can coexist (Cristol & Gimbert, 2008). Overt prejudice often declines as children enter middle childhood and learn to recognise commonalities across different groups and individual differences within them (Aboud & Amato, 2001; Aboud & Doyle, 1995). However, loyalty to the in-group may increase and become self-perpetuating, especially if peers reinforce this tendency (Castelli et al., 2007). Unfortunately, increased cognitive capacity does not necessarily result in decreased prejudice (Banaji et al., 2008), and racial slurs as tools for rejection often increase as children get older. At the same time, children learn to hide socially unacceptable views from adults and may feign more cross-group tolerance than they feel (Monteiro et al., 2009).

The media often exacerbate these tendencies by disseminating propaganda and stereotypes that contribute to national, cultural, racial, and religious divisions and discrimination and reinforce white

cultural hegemony (Nilsen & Turner, 2021; Doane, 2022). For instance, in their meta-analysis of 345 worldwide studies (2000-2015), Ahmed and Matthes (2017) found that, after the 9/11 attacks, the mainstream media were more likely to portray Muslims as terrorists and religious extremists. The prevalence and intransigence of racial and gender bias was illustrated in a recent qualitative study, conducted with more than 70 elementary school-aged children (8-12 years) living in the Czech Republic (Supa et al., 2021a). When the children were asked to assign roles to actors from various racial, ethnic and gender groups, their choices showed traces of gender imbalance (casting men more than women) and gender stereotypes (men as strong and powerful, women as beautiful and socioemotional). The children also tended to cast white actors in the positive hero roles, and minority actors in the negative outlaw roles.

In the early days of social media, many hoped that the Internet would enable and encourage children and adults to connect with people from different cultures and countries and begin to challenge negative stereotypes and assumptions about others (Glaser & Kahn, 2005). However, many studies have shown that social media often promotes rather than diminishes discriminatory beliefs (Awan, 2014; Cisneros & Nakayama, 2015; Guo & Harlow, 2014), and perpetuates social relations of power and privilege (Holt et al., 2013; Vissers et al., 2012). At the same time, an increasing body of research illustrates how children and youth can collaboratively use social and digital media to participate and express their views on matters important to them (e.g., Mascheroni, 2013; Khalil, 2017), fulfilling the early expectations for social media.

Examples of child and youth activism have been emerging across the globe, including FridaysForFuture, Extinction Rebellion, and Future Coalition. These movements illustrate that young people, who generally have little political or economic power, can become one of the most politically active groups online (Holt et al., 2013; Neumayer & Schossböck, 2011) and can be adept at using digital and social media to initiate and/or contribute to social change (Jenkins et al., 2016). Yet there are still many barriers to participation that children and youth daily encounter not only in public, but also at school and home (e.g., restrictions to discourage the use of social media and/or digital devices, adults' lack of understanding and familiarity about the participatory potential of social and digital media) (Literat et al., 2018).

Another striking aspect of today's activism is that, in addition to youth in secondary schools, elementary school children are also participating, clearly willing and able to make new connections and join these movements. The activism of these younger children is no surprise, as the early childhood multicultural literature is full of examples of how even preschoolers (ages 3-6) can be effective and enthusiastic activists (e.g., Derman-Sparkes & Edwards, 2020; Ramsey, 2015). Despite this evidence, the research about civic engagement using online me-

dia focuses on adolescents and young adults and overlooks children under the age of thirteen (Supa et al., forthcoming). Younger children definitely have a right to have a say in their own lives and to be taken seriously, and we need to learn how best to support their participation. For instance, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai was “only” eleven when she began to write a blog for BBC Urdu about universal rights to education for girls. To promote children’s engagement, we designed and evaluated a workshop that combined the aims and strategies of media and multicultural educations for children aged 9-to-12-years-old, as described in the next section.

Combining media education and multicultural education

To develop educational practices that will support children and youth in exercising their voice, power, and agency by using a range of media, Supa et al. (2021a) propose using a synthesis of multicultural and media education. Media literacy is considered to be a core competence for active and participatory citizenship (Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013), but media education does not necessarily reflect a multicultural perspective. In fact, as discussed previously, media expertise is often used to promote discrimination and divisiveness. Yet combining media education with multicultural education has the potential to support children to develop strong, flexible, and multi-faceted identities as individuals and their capacity to respect and empathise with individuals and groups that may at first seem unfamiliar and possibly threatening (Ramsey, 2015; Hull et al., 2010).

With these connections, children can learn to collaborate with others to become confident and persistent activists who resist social and cultural injustices and inequalities. Using different media platforms, children can connect with individuals and groups from many regions and countries, learn about shared interests and hardships, expand their ideas about fairness and the range of inequities, join in worldwide efforts to confront and challenge discrimination and promote peace and sustainability. As a step towards developing relevant educational practices, it is possible to draw upon the already existing educational aims and strategies that multicultural and media education both share. We designed this project on three specific goals.

The first goal is *to support the development of skills to cooperate and collaborate*. The creation of “communities of critically thinking, morally courageous, and politically engaged individuals, who work together and share power to reform society and who genuinely value diverse realities, voices, individuals, and cultures” (Gay, 1995, p. 181) is at the core of all multicultural endeavors and is becoming more prevalent in media education too. One of the challenges to creating these communities is the individualistic orientation that prevails in most “developed” countries and often leads to competition and the desire to dominate and “win” by sabotaging and under-

mining others (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). Cooperative activities and structures provide a good counterbalance to this competitiveness by promoting children's sense of interdependence, their awareness of others, and their flexibility. Moreover, these activities potentially foster friendships both offline and online among children from diverse groups (Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Slavin, 1995) and among peers with different abilities (Kemple, 2004; Kozleski & Jackson, 1993).

The second goal is *to encourage learners to connect with people from other groups and to challenge stereotypes*. Research has shown that positive and cooperative contact between people from different groups can reduce prejudice. In a review of 121 studies, Raabe and Beelman (2011) concluded that across all ages, children growing up in racially diverse schools developed lower levels of prejudice toward out-group members than their peers in racially homogeneous settings. For communities that are not diverse, media can provide ways of learning about unfamiliar groups and create some avenues for contact and connection. In fact, even brief exposure using media or classroom activities may open children's minds and encourage inclusiveness. Programs developed in Northern Ireland to address the tensions between Protestant and Catholic children (Connolly et al., 2006; Connolly & Hosken, 2006) showed that children who observed a series of short, televised cartoons encouraging social inclusion and those who participated in a live dramatic presentation increased their awareness of commonalities across groups, their ability to recognise social exclusion, and their willingness to include others. Digital and social media potentially offer spaces and means to promote a global consciousness and create and share alternative narratives that challenge stereotypes and divisiveness. Children are able to "access content, which transcends local, or even regional, physical, and cultural boundaries in their media experiences" (Lemish, 2015, p. 6). For example, children from all over the world enjoy and recreate Japanese manga and anime (Woodfall & Zezulkova, 2019). Based on a 3-year ethnographic study, Marino (2015) argues that "new media constitute spaces of digital togetherness, where diasporic experiences and transnational identities are constructed and negotiated" (p. 1).

The third goal is *to support learners in expressing their voice and civically participating*. As children learn about and communicate with people in different communities and countries, they may be exposed to hardships and inequities that are troubling. At the same time, children can use social and digital media to learn, communicate, and take actions with peers in different regions and countries and to exercise their rights, agency, voice, and power (Jenkins et al., 2016). They can transcend their local and regional boundaries and participate at a global level (Habashi & Worley, 2014) to share ideas, network, mobilise, raise funds, communicate to the public, and lobby (Forbrig, 2005). Media education supports this goal by providing children with opportunities to use diverse media to begin to "practice critique and collaboration in

preparation for becoming political agents in a participatory democracy” (Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013, p. 1616). The following section illustrates how these joint aims and strategies were applied in this project.

Designing and evaluating the workshop

The pedagogic strategy of multicultural and media education for 9-12-year-olds presented in this paper is one of the outputs of our larger project the Multicultural Life and Learning of Child Prosumers 2018-2021. It builds upon the findings of qualitative research conducted with children aged 8-12, focusing on: 1) their attitudes towards and relationships with people from diverse cultures in relation to media content they both consume and produce; and 2) their perceptions of diversity and normalcy within their peer culture. The data for this larger study included findings from 25 focus groups (total of 85 children, 46 girls and 39 boys) from four state-funded public schools in different geographical regions of the Czech Republic. Focus groups were divided by age into younger (8-10 years) and older (10-12 years) groups and were on average 45 minutes long. Based on the findings from the focus groups (see Supa et al., 2021a,b, 2022, Němcová-Tejkalová et al., 2021), a three hour long workshop was developed in cooperation with the Multicultural Centre Prague. The Centre is a non-profit organisation engaged in educational and research activities in the area of human rights and equality. They also design and run school workshops focused on intercultural competence and understanding. The length (3 hours) and format (a workshop) of our program followed the common practice of the Centre in order to ensure that they would be able to continue to use this model after the project was over.

The workshop was implemented with three different groups at two elementary schools, one situated in a small town (one group) and one in the capital (two groups). Both schools are attended by a majority as well as racial and/or ethnic minority students and by socioeconomically disadvantaged and privileged students. In total, sixty children (20 in each workshop) aged 10-11 participated in the project. The relevant gatekeepers gave written consents while the children gave oral consents. The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University. The workshops were led by two instructors from the Multicultural Center Prague.

The research team was present at each workshop to conduct classroom observations and to disseminate a written reflective questionnaire to children at the end of each session (as suggested by Cohen et al., 2018). It asked what they found interesting about the workshop, what they would recommend improving, and the main thing they took away from the workshop. Observation notes and children's questionnaires were analysed and discussed with the instructors after each session. These conversations led to some modest changes to improve the subsequent workshops.

“Changing the world together”

This project, named “Changing the world together,” stands on three pillars that combine the goals and strategies discussed in the literature review. These are 1. fostering cooperation through personal experience and shared interests; 2. challenging stereotypes and encouraging inclusion of diverse people; and 3. developing the willingness and confidence of children to become civically engaged and to use different types of media to express their views, connect and communicate with others, and take action. Based on these pillars, the workshop was divided into three main sections, each consisting of two activities. Throughout the session, children gradually worked on developing a fictional campaign around a specific issue. Activities were logically sequenced and linked to help children go from the initial brainstorming to the presentation of their final product without being overwhelmed by a number of tasks at once. Table 1 below summarises the final version of the workshop.

Activity	Aim and strategies	Tools	Time
Introduction			
Circle time	To introduce the purpose and structure of the workshop, ask for oral informed consents, state basic rules and get to know each other.	Informal place, where everyone can sit (e.g., carpet on the floor)	10
Goal 1: Establishing cooperation through personal experience and shared interests			
1 Pulling together by one rope	To show the importance of mutual cooperation in solving complex social issues that need to be worked on collaboratively through asking children to jointly move one balloon without anyone touching it.	Inflatable Earth balloon and cut ropes for each child (approx. 1 meter long)	10
2 Looking for shared civic interests	To come up with social issues and causes important to the individual children at first and then find common overlaps to form groups. Through this, to learn about the variety of civic interests important to children that they can collectively address.	A white/black board or flipchart paper to write down children's ideas	20
Goal 2: Challenging stereotypes and encouraging inclusion of diverse people			
3 Being inspired	To illustrate through watching videos how young activists facing certain disadvantages (e.g., based on skin color, gender, disability, sexual orientation, the experience of being bullied for their physical appearance etc.) can use their struggle to empower themselves and others with the use of media.	Online videos of diverse young activists from around the world presenting their distinct causes	15
4 From facing challenges to becoming superheroes	To learn that physical appearance, skin color, or physical disability need not be a barrier to being heard in society and that working with someone unfamiliar at first sight can lead to great things. Children meet superheroes from different parts of the world, from culturally different backgrounds, or superheroes with disabilities and choose one to help with their cause.	Pictures of child 'superheroes', ordinary children who can do extraordinary things	15
Goal 3: Becoming activists for social justice/equity through using different media			
5 Communication and media strategy	To support children's willingness and confidence to be civically engaged with the use of different media through creating their own fictional campaign communicating their selected cause.	Examples of different media written on a board or decks of media cards for each group, flipchart papers	25
6 Connecting with 'superheroes' for a common cause	To reinforce the idea of the importance and benefits of cooperating with others who might seem unfamiliar at first and to value joint civic participation.	Superheroes picture in each team	5
Presenting and reflecting			
Share and tell	To share and exercise voice by presenting communication and media strategy, to discuss, receive feedback from peers and to reflect.	Reflective questionnaire	20

Table 1 Intervention for 9-to-12-year-olds “Changing the world together”

Goal 1: Establishing cooperation through personal experience and shared interests

The first activity, 'pulling together by one rope' (Image 1) was an icebreaker designed to support and recognise the importance of peer cooperation to solve complex tasks. Children were given the task of moving an inflatable balloon from place A to place B. Each child had a rubber string, and the children had to figure out how to tie their rubber bands together in order to move the balloon.



Image 1 Inflatable Earth balloon and the 'pulling together by one rope' activity

Observations of this activity showed striking differences between the individual classrooms. The children in one classroom discussed various options and tried to involve as many children as possible. These children appreciated that the activity required a team effort:

"It helped that we worked together, that we didn't let one of us come up with a solution."

"It was important for everyone to get involved, so everyone enjoyed it."

In contrast, in another classroom, a small group of children immediately came up with ideas to solve the initial "balloon activity," and only a few children participated. Some children noted that not all their classmates participated in the activity (*"I didn't like that only a few people came up with the solution, and not everyone got involved"*). The children who did not participate complained that no one had listened to their suggestions or asked them if they wanted to get involved, and they felt pushed aside. Subsequently, the children and instructors discussed how to set the conditions for everyone to take part in similar activities next time (*"It would be better to listen to all the ideas and evaluate them and then try some of them"*).

In the second activity, 'looking for shared civic interests', the children

returned to their seats and were invited by the instructor to decide on a topic relevant to them on which they would like to focus on during the workshop. At first, all of the group members brainstormed ideas and recorded them on a big, shared piece of paper. Some children immediately came up with their ideas (*"I feel like I'm too small. There are billions of stars in just one galaxy. I'm afraid a meteorite will hit us. That we are, as people, too small, too fragile."*), while others needed more time to articulate the issue (*"Nothing is bothering me, what should I do?"*, *"What if it's personal?"*). In some cases, children discussed a topic that was relevant to the whole class, such as bullying or classroom relationships (*"We argue about vaccination, you are/are not vaccinated, and therefore you are/are not good. It divides us"*). After all of the ideas had been recorded, children formed smaller groups (around five children per group) to work on a particular topic. Despite encouragement to select a group based on topic, some children chose to work with their friends, regardless of topic.

The most commonly chosen topics were climate change and ecology (five times), (e.g., fewer cars on streets, bike paths, planting trees). The remaining topics (only chosen by one group each) included: protecting animals, advocating for equal rights for LGBT people, supporting children with divorced parents, communicating the importance of following the covid 19 pandemic measures, improving relationships between peers, standing up against bullying, fighting drug addiction, and easing the fear of the future. Although the topics were not always relevant to social justice and equity, they drew on the children's own lived experiences, which helped children to become engaged. When completing the questionnaire, the children often expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to discuss and reflect on topics that are directly relevant to their lives (e.g. the best about the workshop was that *"we were supposed to give our opinion on life, what seemed to bother us"*).

Goal 2: Challenging stereotypes and encouraging inclusion of diverse people

The goal of the third activity was to inspire children by showing them photos and video clips of young activists from different parts of the world and a range of socio-cultural backgrounds (e.g., video clips by two Czech sisters who call themselves "Sisters in Action" [2,000 followers on YouTube] about environmental protection; a video by user @deepika_v_ [860,000 followers on TikTok] about her own experience of being bullied; or a video by user @crissa_ace [13.3 million followers on TikTok] "We are stronger together" addressing the issue of racism during the ongoing Black lives matter campaign following the tragic murder of George Floyd). In addition to the activists mentioned above, the children also saw photos and heard stories about other people who have overcome challenges to become activists. For example: *Beatrice Vio* is a girl who lost all four limbs to a serious childhood meningococcal infection, yet won Paralympic gold in fencing; *Kevin Doe* from Sierra Le-

one is a talented engineer and technician who makes functional tools, such as generators and batteries, out of garbage and who also made a radio station for his own broadcasting; and *Somoya Farooqi*, an Afghan girl, who is the head of a team of mechanics building robots that detect landmines. All of these young people use their exceptional knowledge and skills to improve their own lives, and the lives of their communities.

During this activity, the children watched the videos and listened to stories of the young activists with interest and engaged in discussions about the content of the videos and how they understood them. They readily talked about what children from other countries were saying or doing, making it easier for them to imagine how they too could share their topics with people from other countries. Children usually recognised the presented issue (e.g., racism, bullying) and often shared their own experience with this topic (*"I only live with my grandmother, I don't have a mom or a dad. I'm having hell at school and being teased."*).

In the fourth activity 'from outcasts to superheroes', the children chose from one of the activists to help them, as a superhero would do, to fight their chosen cause (Image 2). After viewing all of the video clips and listening to stories, each group talked about what specific superhero would help them in their campaign and then selected one that became part of the sixth activity. The children appreciated the whole concept of superheroes and readily discussed possible ways superheroes could help them in their projects. They wondered what countries the superheroes came from and mentioned other examples of children who might also play the role of a superhero (*"I know one swimmer with a disability"*).



Image 2 Selected superheroes and a short description of their superpower

Goal 3: Becoming activists for social justice/equity through using different media

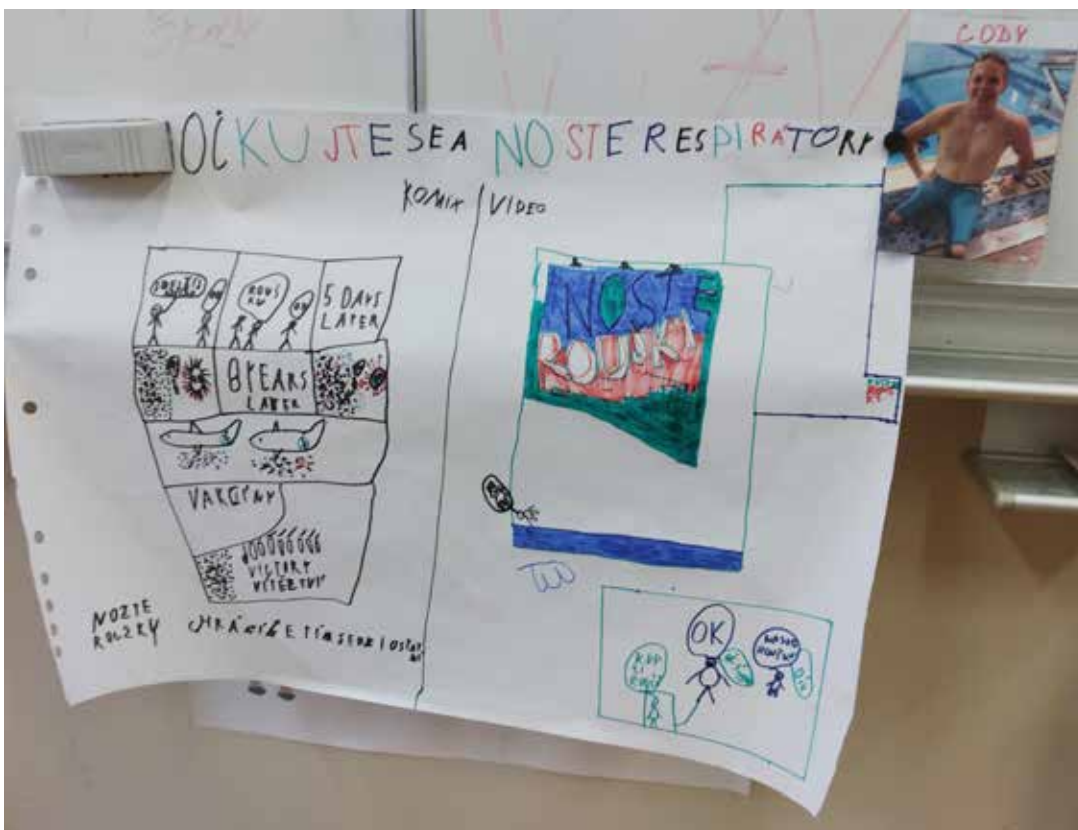
In the fifth activity, 'communication and media strategy', children created a fictional media campaign about their cause. They recorded their ideas on a large piece of paper and selected specific media forms and platforms to support their campaign. These included social media, TV, concerts, comics, and theater. To encourage the children to consider a broad range of media, the instructors provided examples of different media by writing them on the board or giving children a set of cards of different media images (Image 3). The children were familiar with a wide range of media (electronic, theater, and comics) and interested in combining them for their campaigns (see Images 4a and 4b for examples of the resulting posters). They were particularly eager to use social media (Instagram, TikTok, etc.) to fight their cause. In the final reflection, one child wrote: *"We already know a lot about social media, but now we know we could use it for something useful"*. However, their enthusiasm was tempered by their concerns about safety and the risks of cyber bullying.

In the sixth activity, children connected with their selected superhero (sometimes with more than one) and brought him/her/them into their campaign and described how their campaign would benefit from his/her/their superpowers. The children gave specific ideas on how the superheroes could help (*"We could run a charity race"*, *"He could help us turn that plastic into something better"*, *"He can help us get into the media with his radio station"*). They usually



Image 3 Media cards

commented on the superhero's specific skill (e.g., an athlete could help to organize a charity race). However, sometimes they saw the superhero's skills on a more abstract or symbolic level (when a superhero runs fast, he can help "speed up technological development", when a superhero swims well, he could keep us "above water").



Images 4a and 4b Examples of communication and campaign strategies the children developed and presented during the workshops

Presenting and reflecting

Finally, each group presented their communication and media campaigns to all the members of the workshop and received feedback and appreciation from their classmates in the form of discussion. Some children easily presented the results of their work, whereas others had difficulty. Similarly, some had no problem listening to others, while others did. The workshop concluded with a written questionnaire, in which children reflected on the key moments of the session and the most important things they learned. The children noted that they liked working in teams with other classmates and having the opportunity to make a difference by creating materials, presenting arguments, and participating in solving problems (*"We were cooperative, and we had nice people with us."*).

The children, in general, enjoyed the workshop (*"I had a nice and fun day today."*). They recommended that these types of activities should happen more often and that they should last longer (*"I wish I had more time to write and think about it."*). Two recurring themes were the importance of respecting others and their ideas and opinions (*"Everyone can have a different opinion."*) and the benefits of working with others (*"Cooperation is important."*).

Discussion and conclusion

The overall argument of this paper is that the synthesis of media and multicultural education has the potential to encourage elementary school children to collaborate and connect with others, to learn about social justice issues, and to advocate for an equitable society and social justice. As a step towards developing relevant educational practices, we designed, implemented, and evaluated the "Changing the world together" workshop with sixty 10-11 year old children in two elementary schools in the Czech Republic. The workshop was aimed at encouraging children to connect with diverse people while overcoming negative stereotypes and assumptions about others (Glaser & Kahn, 2005) and to perceive online and digital media as potential means for expressing their voice and being civically engaged (Mascheroni 2013; Khalil 2017).

The workshop was based on three joint multicultural and media educational goals. The first goal, 'cooperation through personal experience and shared interests' was implemented through several strategies (e.g., moving the balloon, working together on their campaigns). These activities were designed to enhance children's sense of interdependence (Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Slavin, 1995) and their ability and willingness to collaborate in preparation for becoming civically engaged (Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013). The fact that children were encouraged to talk about issues that were personally relevant to them helped them to engage in the workshop and with each other. As we know from both child-centered media (Buckingham, 2019) and multicultural (Ramsey, 2015) education, focusing on

children's own lives and concerns is usually the best starting point.

In the pilot project, there was not enough time to connect children's personal concerns with broader issues of social justice and equity. However, in a longer program with several workshops, children might begin to see these connections. For example, if children are talking about bullying, the instructors could encourage them to consider larger issues of oppression and inequities in our society. The pain children experience when their parents get divorced might help them empathise with the disruptions and split loyalties that many immigrants experience. When children are interested in ecology, questions about how climate change affects the whole world, but especially poor communities and countries, can be raised. This workshop can be easily adapted for children from a variety of backgrounds. Children who are marginalized because of their race, ethnicity, economic status, ability, and other factors may readily raise issues of social justice and build campaigns around pressing issues in their own lives or immediate communities. The child-centered approach of the workshop should allow diverse children to raise varied ideas while "touching" their core belief system (Korthagen 2005).

The second goal, 'connecting with people from other groups and challenging stereotypes', was implemented using video clips and stories to expand children's ideas about peers and to encourage them to collaborate with peers from diverse groups (Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Slavin, 1995) and with different abilities (Kemple, 2004; Kozleski & Jackson, 1993). It was done only fictionally, with the use of images and stories about superheroes, so it is hard to measure its impact in children's actual behavior toward others. However, we believe it has the potential to begin to increase children's awareness of commonalities with unfamiliar groups and their willingness to include others (Connolly et al., 2006; Connolly & Hosken, 2006). Showcasing the online videos by young activists concerned with global issues, further supports this goal by showing how digital and online media can create meaningful connections and identities that transcend geographical, physical, and cultural boundaries (Lemish, 2015; Marino, 2015; Woodfall & Zezulkova, 2019).

The third goal, 'developing the willingness and confidence to be activists', was implemented through activities in which children discussed issues, created campaigns to address their concerns, and used a wide range of the media to express their views, communicate with others, and engage in activism with unfamiliar as well as familiar peers (e.g., Mascheroni, 2013; Khalil, 2017). Although the workshop was intended for children under 13 years old, who theoretically do not yet have their own social media accounts, we approached them as a potentially active group online who could, both now and in the future, use digital and social media to civically and politically participate (Holt et al., 2013; Neumayer & Schossböck, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2016). By conducting the workshops in schools, we aimed to at least partially address some

of the barriers to digital civic and political participation that children and youth may encounter in formal education (Literat et al., 2018).

This one-time project barely touched the range of possibilities for children to be politically active today and in the future (Holt et al., 2013; Neumayer & Schossböck, 2011) and to civically participate on local as well as global levels (Forbrig, 2005; Habashi & Worley, 2014; Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013). To accomplish these goals, we would need to develop a comprehensive long-term curriculum that promotes learning and understanding that is more “permanent” (Wiggins et al., 2005) and grounded in a deep commitment to social justice. Despite these limitations, we believe that this and similar projects can support children in imagining their potential role as civic actors and agents of change and in seeing how they can use different media to promote that work. We hope that this pilot project will encourage other researchers and educators to explore further the multifaceted and expansive potential in combining media and multicultural curricula.

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