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Restorative circles for police-community dialogue: a facilitation script from the UBUNTU Project in Dublin, Ireland

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Abstract

Few have used restorative practices to structure police-community engagement. Fewer, still, have published their script after doing so, enabling others to use or learn from it. This paper presents and explains a script that the authors devised and used to facilitate a two-day dialogue process between six Gardaí (Irish police officers) and six young Black adults in Blanchardstown, Dublin, Ireland.

Drawing on literature from the fields of restorative practices and dialogue, the paper recounts the four stages of the process delivered. It started by 1)

establishing relationships, common intentions and norms, before the participants shared and explored their experiences and perceptions of 2) Blanchardstown and belonging, 3) policing, and 4) the future.

The article explains the context in which the project and dialogue process took place, before providing an annotated script to outline the questions asked and activities undertaken, and explain their rationale. The dialogue process was co-designed by the project lead (Marder), project researcher (Kurz) and young Black adults and police who received restorative practices training, including one person from each who, with Marder, co-facilitated the dialogue (Ibeanu, O'Neill).

Key words

Policing; police-community engagement; restorative practices; dialogue; ethnicity

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1. Introduction

1.1 The UBUNTU Project: context and outline

This article contextualises, presents and explains a script that the authors used to facilitate a two-day dialogue process between six Gardaí (Irish police officers) and six young Black adults. This dialogue took place under the auspices of the UBUNTU Project. Funded by the Irish Research Council, the aim of the UBUNTU Project is to explore the extent to which restorative practices can be used to facilitate dialogue and build understanding between young Black adults living, and Gardaí working, in Blanchardstown.

Blanchardstown is a suburban area in West Dublin, Ireland, which has relatively high levels of ethnic diversity, including a sizeable first-and second-generation immigrant community of African origin or descent (Dhala, et al, 2019). The relationship between the police and the Black community here is a subject of ongoing concern (Gallagher & Pollak, 2021), particularly following the shooting of a young Black adult, George Nkencho, by Gardaí in December 2020.

Following his involvement in facilitating restorative circles in projects involving An Garda Síochána (the Irish police force) and members of the Travelling community and, separately, asylum seekers (Restorative Justice: Strategies for Change, 2021a, 2021b), Marder contacted senior members of An Garda Síochána and colleagues in civil society to explore their interest in collaborating on a funding proposal to the Irish Research Council. Given the ongoing tensions in Blanchardstown, they agreed to apply for funding to study the use of restorative practices to facilitate a police-community dialogue between Gardaí and young Black adults in that area.

This paper's authors are the project lead (Marder), the dialogue's co-facilitators, who were part of a group of 11 young Black adults who, along with a number of Gardaí, received three days of restorative practices training for this project (Ibeanu and O'Neill). Another author includes the project researcher (Kurz), who is evaluating the work through its observation and through ongoing interviews with project participants and partners.

The three project phases included 1) training and co-design, 2) dialogue process delivery, and 3) evaluation. This paper only contextualises, presents and explains the script from the dialogue process; it does not report findings from the project's evaluation. The aim is to permit practitioners, police officers and researchers with an interest in police-community engagement to learn about the decisions taken in the course of designing and facilitating the dialogue process, and to encourage others to explore whether and how restorative practices can help facilitate dialogue and build understanding between police and diverse communities.

1.2 Phase 1: Training delivery and process co-design

After obtaining ethical approval from the Maynooth University Social Research Ethics Committee in March 2022, Marder began to recruit training participants. An Garda Síochána opted to nominate six Community Gardaí based in Blanchardstown for this work, while Marder worked with project partners in Sport Against Racism Ireland (SARI) and the Insaka All-Ireland Youth Movement to identify community members.

The goal was to recruit a gender-balanced group of six Gardaí and six community members. Ultimately, six Gardaí (five male, one female) and five community members (one male, four female) undertook three days of restorative practices training over two weeks in May and June 2022. This training was provided by project partner Childhood Development Initiative (CDI). The volunteer trainees from the community were compensated for their time as research assistants to the project. Both groups undertook a separate preparation meeting with Marder, Kurz and CDI's restorative practices training manager, before being brought together in the training; Ibeanu and O'Neill were part of this group.

The training was delivered by two CDI-accredited trainers: a White male with experience of working for An Garda Síochána, and a Black female with experience of community development. The trainers met together, with CDI's restorative practices training manager and with Marder and Kurz to develop a bespoke training programme.

Like most restorative practice trainings, and also like the dialogue process itself, the training began with relationship-building exercises, before it used games, role plays and reflective exercises, and combining individual and group work, to teach restorative principles and skills. The training used sequential 'circle processes' – a restorative process used to structure dialogue non-hierarchically. In this process, a group sits physically in a circle and the right to speak revolves around participants sequentially. They use a talking piece, passed from person to person to indicate whose turn it is to speak or to listen. No person may speak unless they are holding the talking piece, meaning that everyone has an equal opportunity to speak, or to pass if they prefer (Pranis, 2005). The circle was also the restorative process that the organisers planned to use in the dialogue process.

The training focused on the principles, concepts and skills of restorative practices. This included restorative values, processes, language and questions, non-violent communication (Rosenberg, 2015), emotional intelligence, differentiating between forms of blame and shaming (Braithwaite, et al., 2006) and vulnerability (Brown, 2015).

Given that the training brought together Gardaí and young Black adults, the trainers placed significant emphasis, and invested considerable time, in enabling

participants to get to know each other and find commonalities, before discussing such issues as stereotyping. On the second day, they practiced circle facilitation skills, knowing that at least two persons from the group would be identified to co-facilitate the dialogue process in Phase 2.

The morning of the third day focused on sharing and reflecting on stories and on personal experiences of stereotyping and stigmatisation. In the afternoon, Marder met with the participants to discuss and design the format, content and logistics of the dialogue process. The purpose was to enable trainees to co-develop the plans and script for the dialogue process. Participants discussed the relative merits of different structures, activities, role plays and circle questions, shaping the outline and content of the script. The group was asked if any person wished to self-nominate to co-facilitate the dialogue process in Phase 2. One person from the Black community and one person from the police put themselves forward to take on the co-facilitator roles (Ibeanu and O'Neill), alongside Marder.

1.3 Phase 2: Dialogue process preparation and delivery

The three co-facilitators met around one month before the dialogue process, and again on the week of the dialogue, to clarify their roles and refine and finalise the script. In between these meetings, Marder integrated their feedback into the draft script and circulated it to the entire trained group to get further feedback.

The co-facilitators agreed on several logistical points, including that Gardaí would wear plain clothes, and that the two days would not finish with a lunch (as initially planned), but rather the group would come together after lunch each day for some closing circles. They agreed that the dialogue would take place from 09:30-14:00 each day, with a mid-morning break and lunch provided around 13:00, before the final reflections.

Other practicalities discussed included that the facilitators would share responsibility for reminding participants, if necessary, to abide by guidelines that they would agree on the first day. The co-facilitators also agreed to be responsible for checking in with anybody from their own group who appeared to be distressed or stepped outside. In the event, there was virtually no non-compliance with the

guidelines (although Marder once reiterated that the talking piece should revolve sequentially in response to each question), nor were any of the facilitators required to check in with any individual.

The dialogue was held in a neutral venue (a local authority building and community centre) in West Dublin, just outside of central Blanchardstown. Attendees included the four authors and 10 participants: five Gardaí (four male, one female) working in Blanchardstown, and five young Black adults (four male, one female) living in Blanchardstown.

To recruit Gardaí for Phase 2, Marder wrote a short explanation of the project, which local Garda management circulated to all officers working in the area to seek expressions of interest. Seven Gardaí expressed an interest, all of whom attended a preparation meeting with Marder and Kurz; two out of the seven ultimately could not attend the dialogue.

Marder worked with project partners and other local civil society bodies (notably, Foróige, a youth development organisation) to identify the community participants. Six young Black adults attended a preparation meeting, of whom one ultimately did not attend the dialogue process. For both phases, Garda preparation meetings were in the local police station, and community preparation meetings took place in a meeting room in the local library. Community volunteers in Phase 2 received a multi-store gift card as compensation.

The dialogue process mostly used circles to structure the conversations, with work in pairs and small groups interwoven in the two days. The use of restorative circles and a talking piece was aimed at reducing the effects of perceived power relationships in the room and ensuring that everyone had an equal chance to speak and listen. This also meant that it was not possible (at least, while the talking place was ‘in-play’) to have back-and-forth interactions, debates or arguments.

All questions and activities were aimed at building understanding between those present by encouraging the sharing of personal experiences. The focus on sharing personal experiences emerged from the literature on dialogue and aimed to ensure that participants did not challenge, dismiss or make assumptions about something that someone else shared (Herzig and Chasin, 2006; Johnson and Weisberg, 2021;

Schirch and Campt, 2007). As such, participants were asked to speak from personal experience only, with opportunities provided to ask questions of others present to get more information about how the experiences they shared might inform their perspectives.

Each discussion was also followed by a reflection on the similarities and differences between the experiences shared. Some conversations took longer than expected, requiring the co-facilitators to adapt the script as they went along, with some questions identified in advance as ones that could be skipped to save or make time, if necessary.

The script provided below is the final script as practiced, with unused questions removed from the main body, but added into footnotes. The footnotes also contain explanations of the logic or importance of decisions made in relation to circle facilitation and the design of the script for this context.

We are not reporting findings until after the interviews are conducted and the data are fully analysed (Phase 3). A literature review found limited research or practical support published specifically on the use of restorative practices to enable police-community dialogue. We drew heavily on three practical texts when designing the dialogue process, namely Johnson and Weisberg (2021), Schirch and Campt (2007), and Herzig and Chasin (2006). These texts influenced our understanding of the role and limitations of dialogue, and how best to design and communicate the purpose of the process. They heightened our sensitivities to the dimensions of institutional power and manifestations of structural racism between minority communities and government agencies, which require special consideration and further study.

The publication of this script aims to help others learn from and build on our work, and ensure this project is as transparent as possible. While the best ways to build understanding and relationships between police and diverse communities remain unclear, restorative practices can be attempted and researched to explore their humanising potential.

2. Dialogue script

2.1 Part 1: Establishing relationships, common intentions and norms (Day 1, 09:30-11:10)

[ROOM LAYOUT: A CIRCLE OF CHAIRS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM, WITH NO TABLES. A FLIPCHART IN THE CORNER SAYING 'WELCOME!' A RESEARCHER IS SITTING IN THE CORNER OF THE ROOM WITH THEIR LAPTOP ON A TABLE. EACH CHAIR HAS A NOTEPAD AND PEN ON THE SEAT. THE FACILITATOR IS SITTING DIRECTLY OPPOSITE THE DOOR; THE CO-FACILITATORS ARE SITTING AT 10 O'CLOCK AND 3 O'CLOCK RELATIVE TO THE FACILITATOR. ALL PARTICIPANTS WERE PREPARED AND GAVE CONSENT FOR THE USE OF THE CIRCLE PROCESS AND OBSERVATION BY THE RESEARCHER.]

Welcome (09:30-09:40)

Hello everyone, thank you so much for coming today. I am very grateful for your time. [FACILITATOR INTRODUCES SELF, ROLE and PURPOSE OF PROJECT]¹

I'll explain how it will all work in a few minutes, but I want to start by emphasising how important this work could be. I heard from you in our preparation meetings that there is a risk of mistrust, uncertainty, anxiety, and even fear, in the community at large, and probably in this room now. We also know that nothing quite like this has happened in Ireland. So, you are all truly trailblazers here today.

[FACILITATOR DESCRIBES PREVIOUS, RELATED WORK THEY HAVE UNDERTAKEN] This work always has its risks, but I believe there is so much potential to give people the opportunity to speak and to understand each other better that this is worth doing. Everyone here is new to this, so I ask you please: stick with us even if you hear things you find really hard to digest, which you probably will. We ask everyone to have the strength to accept that the experiences people will share are their own and to allow yourself to be open, honest, and maybe even to be changed by what you hear.

Crucially, this process has been co-designed, and will be co-delivered, by colleagues who had the same training as myself, so I'll welcome [CO-FACILITATORS] and ask

¹The script was read by Marder, the facilitator, unless stated

them to introduce themselves, say a few words about their experience so far, and why they think this is important. [CO-FACILITATORS INTRODUCE THEMSELVES]

Thank you for that, and thanks also to our researcher who is taking anonymous notes today and will contact you each to ask to interview you about your experience. This should be as comfortable for you as possible, so if you need to get water, stand up, go to the bathroom, take an important call, you should feel free to do that.

Warm up (09:40-09:50)

We're going to start by getting to know each other, and then I'll outline these two days, and agree on some ground rules. We want you moving around the room and speaking to people you don't know as much as possible. So, find someone you don't know well. Introduce yourself and tell each other about what you like about Dublin or about where you're from. And remember three things that the other person says, because you'll introduce each other to the group. You have five minutes to do this, and then we'll introduce each other. Write it down if it helps you. OK?

Introductory circles (09:50-10:20)

OK everyone, back in the circle. We'll sit like this because we use the circle to structure conversations, by which I mean a facilitator asks a question, and the opportunity to respond goes around each person in order. This means you cannot interrupt until your turn so that everyone has an equal chance to speak, and ensures that dialogue does not become debate. To help this, facilitators use a talking piece. Today, we'll use this [FACILITATOR TO INTRODUCE TALKING PIECE AND PASS TO CO-FACILITATOR 1].²

Circle [CO-FACILITATOR 1]: Let's go around and everyone can tell us your own name, and then introduce us to the person you spoke to – try and remember something they like about Dublin or where they're from.³

² The choice and introduction of a talking piece is important. Talking pieces can relate symbolically to the topic of a circle, and provide an opportunity for the facilitator to show vulnerability through a story, or to lighten the mood through humour. Here, the talking piece was a stuffed animal of Canadian origin, permitting the facilitator to make a joke about their joint Canadian-British nationality and living in Ireland, and to show vulnerability and draw a symbolic connection to the topic by speaking about their own identity.

³ Facilitators usually answer the question themselves first in a technique called 'modelling'. This is important to set the tone and time expectation for each response in a circle. They then pass the talking piece to the left. Later, if several questions are asked in quick succession, the facilitator can ask if anyone else wants to go first, in which case the person who goes first should specify in which direction they will then pass the talking piece.

Circle [CO-FACILITATOR 2]: Let's go around again and I'll invite you to tell us... what do you hope to get out of this dialogue? Remember that you're fine to say the same thing as someone else has already said, or to pass if you want.⁴

Circle: Let's go around again to see if anyone would like to add anything, or reflect on anything that was said so far. Remember that if you do not wish to add anything else, you may simply pass the talking piece to the next person.⁵

Purpose of the dialogue process (10:20-10:30)

The aim of these days is simple: to see if, by getting to know each other like this, and sharing personal experiences of life, of where we live and work, and of policing, we might understand each other better. The assumption is that relationships are crucial, but we forget to dedicate time to getting to know each other and building relationships. So of course we don't always understand each other well, because we don't take time to get to know each other.

The title of this project is: 'Using restorative approaches to build understanding between young Black adults and Gardaí', but the short title is UBUNTU. In some African languages, that means 'people'. In others, it is a philosophy broadly meaning "I am because we are." To me, it's about seeing the common humanity in everyone. What does that make you think of? "I am because we are"?⁶

Thanks for that. So, although we're here to help address the relationship between Gardaí and the Black community, we have to remember that we won't sort the whole issue. Police-community relations are a challenge globally, especially in working class and ethnic minority communities, for reasons that are far beyond the control of anyone here. All we can do is try to understand each other better, and hope that we'll contribute to greater trust and improved relationships locally by doing so.⁷

⁴ Early segments were designed with two successive questions, with the co-facilitators taking turns to ask the questions. It was important to demonstrate from the outset that the co-facilitators from the two communities were taking an active role in the facilitation of the process.

⁵ It can often be worth going around a second time in an early, low-stakes circle, alongside a reminder that passing is permitted. This can help break the taboo of passing, especially if some people pass immediately.

⁶ The co-facilitators were prepared in advance to give the wider group time to answer open questions first, but to be ready to come in with ideas and answers in the event that no person responds.

⁷ Expectation management is a critical element of preparing for and delivering a restorative process. To minimise the risk of disappointment, one must be explicit about what the process aims to do and what can and cannot be achieved

We'll divide this into four parts. For the first half this morning, we'll get to know each other as we have done so far, and agree some common goals and guidelines, or ground rules, for our time together. We absolutely need to agree on guidelines because they're the foundation of everything that follows.

Then after a break at 11:00, we'll share personal experiences and perceptions of living and working in Blanchardstown. Lunch is at 1, then at 1:30 we'll have a circle, and hopefully we'll get you out before 2.

Tomorrow morning, in the third part, we'll explore our experiences and perceptions of policing, having built a foundation for that deeper conversation, and consider the similarities and differences between the experiences shared. Then finally, we'll look forward and discuss what a positive future looks like to each of us. And again, the running order, topics and questions were written and agreed with colleagues from the Black community and the Gardaí to ensure that this suits everyone.

You've seen the restorative circle process already. It just means that when you have the talking piece, the right to speak goes around the circle in order, and you have to wait your turn to speak, you cannot jump in or interrupt until it comes around to you. The point is to guarantee that everyone has an equal chance to speak, and it prevents back and forth between two people. I never shut up myself, so without this, I'd talk endlessly. It'll be difficult to wait sometimes, but we want to see if this approach helps. Also, just because you can speak at your turn doesn't mean you have to say anything. You can pass it to the next person, no problem. And please don't speak for too long so we can get to everyone. Is everyone happy with that?

Circle: Let's go around once to see how you all feel about using the circle process and if anyone has any questions.

You have to be willing to suspend judgment and to learn from people with different worldviews, rather than assuming your worldview is the only objectively correct one. Try to find insights and truth in what others say, combine ideas you agree with and your own ideas to build a larger truth than you have on your own.

This is dialogue, not debate. We're not trying to convince anyone of our perspective, we're not making assumptions about why people think or feel the way they do, and we're not debating the use of police powers or if a specific incident was right or

wrong. We only share our personal experiences. Speak from your experience. You don't have to represent, answer for or explain anyone else, or respond to something someone else says.

We're not going to fix the world, and we can't require actions from anyone. Just speak for yourself, let others speak for themselves. Is that alright? Any questions or concerns? [CO-FACILITATORS] would you like to add anything?⁸

Community guidelines (10:30-10:50)

First, we want to hear from you to agree on some common guidelines for how we're going to be when we're together.

Circle [CO-FACILITATOR 2]: Let's go around and share one word that reflects both how you want to be treated by others today, and how you are willing to treat others. It's fine to repeat something that has already been said.⁹

Circle [CO-FACILITATOR 1]: Let's go around and share one word of something you'll leave at the door, that you can commit to not bringing with you or to not being these days.

Sounds like you agree on most things. What did you notice coming up often? We have [FACILITATOR READS OUT LIST]. Would anyone like to remove, add or change anything there? From us as facilitators, we want to ensure that everyone:

- Listens deeply – be present, and hang in even when something is hard to hear
- Speaks and listens respectfully, honestly and compassionately
- Is willing to learn from those with different experiences. Don't accidentally invalidate, criticise or attempt to persuade others, and don't let anyone feel blamed, accused or judged

⁸ The co-facilitators were prepared to try and observe whether the instructions and explanations were fully understood by participants. They were given opportunities like this to clarify at regular intervals, or to say "all good" if they felt that no clarifications were necessary.

⁹ For these two questions, the facilitator wrote down what participants said as the talking piece went around, including noting where a descriptive word was said more than once. Separately, participants in circles should be reminded that they can say something that has already been said. Otherwise, there is a risk that people feel the need to add something new, or not to speak at all. This can be emphasised by relating that, if everyone says the same thing, it permits the observation that there is a consensus in the room, which is important to know.

- Confidentiality – if you discuss your experiences of this with anyone else, you must not attach names or other identifying information to particular comments
- Feel free to express emotion and to swear or... whatever – we're all adults here. And finally...
- Be good to yourself – take a break if you need to, go to the bathroom, get water, and be really careful not to disclose anything you don't want to, or that you might regret later

All this goes for among those we know as well. It's no good if someone opens up and then a friend or colleague makes fun of them later on for this. So you're all invited to ensure that the ground rules are followed, especially among people you know.

Circle: Is everyone happy to abide by these guidelines? Just say "all good" if so, or you can ask questions and express any other concerns or thoughts if you want.

Facilitators' roles (10:50-11:00)

Our responsibilities and roles for these dialogues are to:

- Maintain the structure of the circles and the focus on sharing experiences - even if it becomes challenging, we'll maintain this. We'll also:
- Remind you to suspend judgment, listen and speak from your own experience
- Ensure guidelines are adhered to and remain attentive to participants' feelings and reactions
- Indicate how much time we have for each speaker or conversation.
- Summarise the main themes and take notes where necessary.
- Support anyone who finds a conversation challenging. This means, if you seem to be having a hard time or if you wanted to take a minute, someone will come and check in on you.
- And we are multi-partial. That means we invite participation from everyone, and are conscious of power in the room and we try to raise up unheard voices. We're equal in this circle but of course, in all countries, police organisations have a special status in society and law that gives them power over citizens, while ethnicity can both hold power and marginalise. So, facilitators have to be careful and conscious about issues of power as we facilitate.

We want to keep our interventions to a minimum, but we might have a responsibility to intervene to:

- Clarify issues from the perspective of the speaker
- Manage the time available for dialogue and for each conversation
- Moderate if someone makes a judgment on others or dismisses someone's experiences, and
- Validate participants by affirming their emotions or connecting experiences to research.

We will do our best not to cut you off, unless we must to ensure that everyone can speak. Our abilities don't include mind reading, so if there is something you want us to know, or if there is something you need at a particular time, you have to tell us. Come whisper it to a facilitator, for example, if you want. Does anyone have any questions or concerns? [CO-FACILITATORS] would you like to add anything?

Break (11:00-11:10)

2.2 Part 2: Sharing and exploring experiences and perceptions of Blanchardstown and of belonging (Day 1, 11:10-14:00)

Experiences of living and working in Blanchardstown (11:10-12:00)

The aim is to share personal experiences to help us understand each other. We know that people experience life differently due to things like money, family, ethnicity and so on. We also know that our experiences help shape our beliefs. So, by sharing personal experiences, we'll understand better why we come to different conclusions about how the world works, and how we see our relationships with institutions and with others. This will give us a basis to discuss policing tomorrow.

Remember to speak from your personal experience. No need to respond to someone else or speculate why others have the experiences or beliefs they do. There will be time to ask questions later. Just respond to the questions, and listen carefully and respectfully as others do the same. I ask everyone to take at most a minute so we can get to everyone. Facilitators will only interrupt if we need to move on due to

time, or to remind people of the agreed guidelines. Remember you can take a second to think, or pass if you prefer. Otherwise, just wait until it gets to you. Ok?

Circle [CO-FACILITATOR 1]: First, we'll invite everyone to share a bit about how you ended up living or working in Dublin 15 and your experience of living or working here. Just for a minute each.¹⁰

So, what are some of the really important things you heard there, and the similarities and differences in the experiences and perceptions shared?¹¹

Are there any questions you want to ask others about what led them to a belief or how an experience affects their beliefs?

Energiser (12:00-12:05)

In the spirit of moving you around the room and meeting each other, I want you to find someone else you don't know well and, for five minutes, talk about who you look up to in life and ask them who they look up to and why. Your role models or heroes now, or growing up. Have a good stretch of your body in this time as well.

Experiences on belonging (12:05-13:00)

Now we're going to talk about belonging: what it means to belong, and what it feels like to belong or to feel as though you don't belong. Of course, our identities are complex. So, I want you to write down up to 10 identities you have on separate pieces of paper in your notebooks. Write down up to 10 things you identify as – it can be anything, a sport team you support or play for, as a brother, sister or partner, something you work as or study, or anything else. You have five minutes to do that. You don't have to put them in order, and you don't have to share them afterwards.

Does everyone have at least five or more? Tear each one out of your books so you have them as separate pieces of paper. Now, take the first one in your hand. Look

¹⁰ As noted previously, the co-facilitators were asked to 'model' these questions by answering first. In addition, due to time, a prepared question was skipped after this one. The question stated: *Co-facilitator 2: Next - and also in a minute each - what do you see as one important challenge facing Blanchardstown, and what do you think will influence whether or not Blanchardstown overcomes that challenge? Again, you can agree with something someone else said, or pass if you want.*

¹¹ Again, the co-facilitators are prepared to intervene here if no other person comes in.

at it, think about it, think about what it means to you. Now, tear it into tiny pieces. Then one-by-one, look at each other piece of paper and tear them up.¹²

So, who found that easy or difficult, and why? Identities are so important, not least, because we have so many. But we also have such a strong tendency to stereotype: we reduce people to one identity to which we assume they belong, and then make assumptions about them based on that.

Circle: So, we'll go around, and I'd like to invite everyone to share whether you have ever had any experiences which made you feel that you were stereotyped, or an experience that made you feel as though you didn't belong because of a specific identity of yours that someone focused on, to the exclusion of others? I'll give you a minute to think about that, and then we can go around.¹³ I ask that you speak for maybe a minute so we can get around everyone, and remember you can pass.¹⁴

So, what are some of the really important things you heard there, and the similarities and differences in the experiences and perceptions shared?¹⁵

Are there any questions you want to ask others about something you heard there?

We have 30 minutes for lunch, then we'll come back for a circle before we hopefully get you out before 2pm as planned, so I'll call you back at 13:30. Have a good lunch!

Lunch (13:00-13:30)

Closing circles (13:30-14:00)

Circle: What is one thing you heard this morning that you want to think or hear more about?

¹² This exercise, aiming to demonstrate the importance of varied identities to us all, came from another training course Marder took, delivered by international mediator Bill Marsh (see www.billmarsh.co.uk).

¹³ For complicated circle questions – or indeed, any circle question – it can be beneficial to give the group some short time to think about what they want to say, before asking the first person to speak. This means that the people who speak first are not rushed into it, and the others might be able to focus better on listening because they are not thinking about what they wish to say when it is their turn.

¹⁴ Due to pressure of time, we skipped a circle question here, which said: *I'd like to suggest we think about this really specifically in relation to ethnicity and diversity now and the fact that Ireland was not very ethnically diverse for a very long time, and now it is increasingly so. So the next question is: when you were growing up, what did you learn or what did you hear about ethnicity and diversity from family, friends, the media or any other people around you?*

¹⁵ Again, the co-facilitators are prepared to intervene here, especially if no person offers a theme or point.

One small piece of homework for you: when you get home, ask a friend or a family member three words they would use to describe you. We'll discuss this tomorrow, so please bring three words that someone close to you would use to describe you.

2.3 Part 3: Sharing and exploring experiences and perceptions relating to policing (Day 2, 09:30-11:45)

Welcome (09:30-10:00)

Thank you so much to everyone for coming back to us for the second day. Again, we'll start by getting to know each other. So, get up and find someone you haven't spoken with much and show them a recent photo on your phone that tells a story about you, or if you prefer, just tell a recent story about you.

Would anyone like to share what they showed with the whole group?

Circle: How would your best friend or a parent or family member describe you? Either use a word that you got from someone last night, or think how someone might describe you.

Would anyone like to ask someone a question about a word that they used?

Experiences and perceptions relating to policing (10:00-11:00)

Today, like yesterday, we're going to share experiences and perceptions, but having considered living and working in Blanchardstown, belonging and stereotypes, we'll focus on policing. And we'll debrief each time to try and understand similarities and differences in our experiences and perspectives, while avoiding making assumptions about others and speaking only from our own experience.

Our guidelines still apply on respect, waiting turns, listening, confidentiality etc. And remember that we can't solve all the problems or decide whether a specific use of police powers is right or wrong here. We're just discussing our experiences to understand each other better.

We can certainly guarantee that the overarching problems are not caused by anyone in this room, but created by a combination of historical, structural and institutional actions, and handed down to us. So we can move towards a shared responsibility for changing structures and relationships.

We'll start with a reverse role-play. So, get into mixed groups and take turns acting out these roles. What we want is a Garda to play a member of the community, and a community member to play a Garda. [ORGANISE GROUPS] The scenarios:

- people playing Gardaí, you're arriving at a house to take a statement from a person who has reported a hate-motivated crime as the victim
- people playing Gardaí, you're conducting a traffic stop on Blanchardstown High Street during the daytime, of a car driven by a young person
- people playing Gardaí, you're stopping and searching a young person on Blanchardstown High Street

This is about teasing out and playing out all our perceptions. You have 10 minutes and then we'll get feedback. You can decide if anyone else is there or any backstory. Any questions?¹⁶

[DEBRIEF LED BY CO-FACILITATORS - GO GROUP TO GROUP FOR FEEDBACK] What was that like for you? What did it teach you about how the Black community experiences policing? What did it show you about the role of the Gardaí in helping the public?

So, we'll move to some general questions about our experiences relating to policing, before discussing what a positive future might look like. We'll use the talking piece, so it goes around us, only the holder can speak, but you're free to pass your turn, or take a second to think before speaking. And please try to speak for just a minute, and we may jump in to move us along due to time, or remind people gently about the guidelines agreed yesterday.

As we focus on your experiences and how they made you feel, remember that this can include something that happened to someone else, but what we ask is that nobody make assumptions or try to rationalise, defend or challenge something that is said. There is no point debating the truth or precision of something that someone talks about, or trying to work out why someone who isn't here said or did something. Instead, as you listen to others, try and think about how our experiences, including things that happen to us and that we hear from others, can affect our perceptions of the world.

¹⁶ Facilitators to wait for five minutes, then check in on each group to see how they are doing and if they have any questions.

Circle: In a minute each: how did you feel about the police growing up, and why do you think you felt that way? Maybe your family or friends told you about them, you got information from someone else, or your experiences influenced your views? Remember not to respond to someone else when it comes to you, but to speak from your own experience. Some of this may be tough to hear, but essential.

Break (11:00-11:10)

Caucuses – what questions remain? (11:10-11:45)

Now, we will ask you to get into caucuses, which means get into two groups with your own community. The activity is for you to come up with all the questions you still have left that can help you understand the experiences and perceptions of the other group better. The two co-facilitators will join their groups to help you decide which questions to prioritise or that you can or cannot ask, in accordance with the guidelines. The researcher and I will join a group each to take notes for the research.

You will have 10 minutes to come up with your questions, then the co-facilitator will join the other group to go through those questions with that group for five minutes so that each group can think about the questions they are about to be asked. After that, the groups will have 10 minutes each to ask each other the questions.

[FACILITATE QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION AS ABOVE]

Next, I will ask you how you would describe the relationship between Gardaí and the Black community in Blanchardstown right now? You have a few minutes to do that.

Circle: What words did you write? Just tell us the three words for now.

What were the similarities and differences there? Let's identify these first, and then we can ask 'why' we have different understandings of the issue among us.

So, what are some of the really important things you heard there, and the similarities and differences in the experiences and perceptions shared? Would anyone like to ask someone about why they selected a certain word or words?

Are there any questions you want to ask anyone else about what led them to a belief or how an experience affects their beliefs?

2.4 Part 4: Sharing and exploring perceptions of what a positive future looks like (Day 2, 11:45-14:00)

Thinking about a positive future (11:45-12:30)

For this final part, we'll discuss what a positive future might look like. We cannot mandate action from anyone beyond this room, or even from each other. Only we can decide if we, individually, want to do things differently. But we might be able to build a shared understanding about what we want to see in the future. So, we'll divide into two mixed groups this time and make two circles. The co-facilitators will join a group, ask a circle question and lead you through an activity, before we feed back to the whole group.

Each group will do the Forces of Progress exercise, before feeding back to the whole group. [FACILITATOR HANDS OUT FORCES OF PROGRESS MATERIALS: A3 SHEET WITH EXERCISE ON IT, PENS AND POST-IT NOTES. FACILITATOR TO GET FEEDBACK FROM EACH GROUP AFTER CIRCLE AND FORCES OF PROGRESS ACTIVITY]

[ORGANISE GROUPS AND EXPLAIN FORCES OF PROGRESS ACTIVITY] Your job with this activity is to look at the four squares, write the factors that relate to each square on post-it notes, and put them in the squares.¹⁷ Is that ok? Any questions?

Circle (What would it look like if there were a positive relationship between the Gardaí and Black community in Blanchardstown? How would we know it if we saw it?)

[CO-FACILITATORS TO LEAD FORCES OF PROGRESS ACTIVITY; FACILITATOR TO SEEK FEEDBACK FROM THE GROUPS AFTER 20-25 MINUTES]

Ok, we have half an hour for lunch now, and then we will come back for a couple of circles before we hopefully get you out of here before the 2pm deadline we planned, so back at 13:00 please all!

Lunch (12:30-13:00)

¹⁷ Forces of Progress is an exercise taken from the field of Design Thinking (see Vaugh, et al., 2021). It is a two-by-two grid that asks groups to reflect on 1) the factors that are pushing them away from the current (imperfect) situation 2) what is pulling them towards the new (better) situation, and 3) what habits linked to the current situation are holding them in place, and what anxieties about the new situation are preventing them from adopting it?

Closing (13:00-14:00)

Circle: What is something you have heard in the last two days that surprised you, or that might change the way you think in the future?

Circle: If you could tell other people from your community about the last two days, or give them advice based on the last two days, what would you say?

Circle: What is one positive thing you can personally commit to doing, or something that you might do differently, based on what you learned in these two days?

[FACILITATORS TO GIVE THANKS]

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