An exploration of ‘youth’ and their understandings of ‘democracy’ within PRIA’s *Youth-n-Democracy* Fellowship

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Executive Summary

PRIA’s ‘Youth-n-Democracy’ fellowship was created to provide opportunities for young people to consider their place in society within India, whilst promoting active participation in democracy as a way to seek a more inclusive society. Started in 2019, the fellowship focused on four key learning themes: Self, Identity, Society, and Change. In collaboration with PRIA, this research project aimed to examine ideas of democracy among the fellows of the program, questioning the role self and identity plays in shaping the youths’ understanding of their societal surroundings. Although beginning with a stronger focus on the potential leadership skills the fellows possessed, the research shifted to outline how Self and Identity modules helped the fellows become more introspective, which in turn allowed them to interact with others more open and compassionately; this would lead to more engaged democratic citizens. This project was informed by literature on civic engagement and active participation to illustrate the role of youth in the development space. The research consisted of thirteen, semi-structured interviews: ten conducted with the fellows and three with the staff of the program, which were seen as key informant interviews to build an understanding of the program from the perspective of the organization. Each interview lasted between thirty minutes to over an hour and were conducted around fifteen questions. From these interviews, the data collected was coded into themes: self and identity, democracy, motivations, impacts. These were analysed and the results showed how Self and Identity were the most informative and beneficial sequence of sessions for each fellow interviewed, introducing them to new concepts and approaches to critically reflect on the significance of these ideas. The participants felt that further understanding self and identity helped them to become more inclusive democratic citizens, which was shown through examples of their social action projects. The fellows’ approach and interaction with democracy shifted from voting as the maximum involvement to a desire to work for a more equal society, and to promote the democratic ideals learned beyond the scope of the program. The impact of the fellowship affected both the personal growth of the fellows and, as a result, the wider community around them.
1. Introduction
Prominent Indian economist Amartya Sen argues that ‘the interest and involvement of young people [is] important not only in the process of education, but also for their contribution to the development of harmonious society’ (2011: 38). Participatory Research In Asia (PRIA) is an India-based organisation that is built on the ‘empowerment of the excluded through capacity building, knowledge building and policy advocacy’ (2020). Their ‘Youth-n-Democracy’ (YnD) fellowship was founded in 2019 for college and recent graduate students with the aim to ‘engage and promote the participation of youth’ (PRIA, 2019) in democracy and the wider society through dialogue, education, and encouraging peer relations. The fellowship focuses on four key areas: Self, Identity, Society, and Change, and aims to highlight the importance of diversity through open dialogue to create a more inclusive and participatory idea of democracy among the young people who are involved in the program. PRIA hope by informing a select group of young people, the ideals will ripple out to wider society.

This research project began as an examination of how PRIA looks to encourage reflections on the concepts of “leadership” and “democracy” within the fellowship; however, preliminary informant interviews with staff revealed more emphasis was placed on supporting the fellows to become more open and inclusive citizens in everyday democratic practices rather than leaders. PRIA’s interest in how their teachings and promotion of Self and Identity have manifested within the fellows, and how the fellows feel this has supported their current ideas and practices of democracy and society, narrowed the focus of this research to: an examination of youth and their understandings of democracy through teachings of self and identity. The researcher collaborated with PRIA on the creation of this project, with support by Trinity College Dublin. The fellowship program lasts nine months, and the researcher joined during the last three months of this years’ program. The report will be used to inform PRIA of the fellows’ opinions and experiences during the fellowship, focusing on their interaction with Self and Identity modules and how this was utilised through their social action projects to become more actively democratic citizens.

All of the participants studied in Delhi at various institutes however, during the application process of the fellowship, PRIA prioritised a heterogeneous group by emphasising the
importance of different backgrounds and beliefs. The diversity within the fellowship is portrayed within the fellows themselves: the fellowship consists of 11 males, 8 females, and one non-binary person; although the majority are aged 21, the fellows range from age 19 to 28; 85% of the fellows are current full-time students. The most popular languages spoken are English and Hindi - every fellow speaks both - however multiple other languages are also listed as spoken by the fellows (PRIA, 2020). The fellows came from a variety of educational backgrounds: some attended private schools, or ‘good schools’ (Participant 2); others attended the local high schools. One fellow describes their background as ‘sheltered’, not ‘knowing much about anything basically’ (P6). Another fellow talks about how their parents were ‘not that restrictive’ (P1) which was seen to them as a rarity in the ‘authoritative kind of an environment’ (P1) they grew up in. At a university level, four of the fellows were from a science background, with the rest focusing on art or humanity subjects: as ‘we wanted people, students specifically for the YnD fellowship from different backgrounds, so engineering, science, finance management, so that basically, there's diversity’ (P7). In the Indian context, 28% of the population were enrolled in tertiary education (UNESCO, 2018); and the youth population (ages 15-30) were the largest percentage of population (Ibid.). These statistics emphasise the importance of this youth population in society, as well as to PRIA, and to this project.

Section two consists of a literature review to contextualise “youth” and “democracy” both in India and in the development space formed a basis of understanding that both informed the questions asked and supported understanding of the program itself. Using qualitative methods to form an evaluative methodology, the research for this project consisted of thirteen semi-structured interviews with both current fellows and staff members at PRIA. The interviews were conducted over online platforms and each lasted around 45 minutes on average. The data was transcribed, coded into themes, anonymised and analysed; this is explained further in section three.

Findings from this research project, as outlined in section four, show how PRIA through this project look to encourage more open democratic practices within the 20 fellows involved; this research will show that it was done by developing an open discussion and reflection of identity and self. Section four is divided into parts titled: ‘understanding self and identity’, ‘social action
projects’, and ‘democracy’ to clearly show the progression of ideas from the fellows as they applied reflections from the fellowship to democratic participation: this project will demonstrate how the fellows became more active democratic participants through their application of knowledge from Self and Identity modules to their subsequent social action projects.

2. Literature Review

This literature review was used to explore ideas of “youth” and “democracy” within the development practice and Indian context in order to situate this research. The research was used to inform the preliminary questions asked to the key informants, and to contextualise the project.

a. Youth

‘Youth’ is a much disputed term in the development sphere (Flanagan, Christens, 2011), but this project will use the parameters of the current fellows, people aged between 18 and 30. The study of youth within the development space takes many forms, however the theory most relevant to this project is the material on ‘youth civic engagement’: ‘over the past two decades, the concept of youth citizenship and civic engagement has acquired prominence in research, policy and practice’ (Brady et.al, 2012: 2). Civic engagement ‘refers to the ways in which citizens participate in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community’s future’ (Adler, Goggin, 2005: 236). PRIA’s YnD program supports active participation in democratic practices within communities with the aim of passing knowledge and confidence to others in the wider society to make the greatest impact. Civic engagement is currently used ‘primarily in the context of younger people’ (Ibid.), as the concept differs when applied generationally. The literature argues that: ‘the study of youth’s civic competence needs to be expanded beyond the confines of formal knowledge of government and normative acts such as voting’ (Youniss et.al, 2002: 125): this research topic hopes to explore how PRIA supports the fellows through this expansion of knowledge to become more engaged in the community and democratic practices beyond the bureaucracy of government. Volunteering is a key component of civic engagement (Adler, Goggin, 2005) and a main focus of PRIA’s fellowship: the final module of the fellowship consists of a social action project, the fellows must spend time in the field working on a social issue that is important to them in the wider community. The hope is that their interest and engagement with the topic will encourage others out-with the fellows to take these ideas forward, creating a ripple effect of knowledge and democratic practices. These
marks of civic engagement within the fellowship argue for the inclusion of this literature. In the Indian context: ‘numerous governmental and nongovernmental programs engage [youth] in humanitarian causes’ (Youniss et al., 2002: 128) such as PRIA is doing. The role and research of youth in the development field is vast, and the relevance of Indian youth specifically in regards to democracy, and therefore this project, is related to the position they hold as such a large percentage of the population: ‘engaging young people in the democracy, at national and local governance, is critical since they account for the largest segment of India's population’ (PRIA, 2019: 1).

b. Democracy

This project refers to ‘democracy’ and ‘democratic practice’ throughout, however: ‘all this disagreement about what constitutes democratic practice makes it difficult to apply an overly concise and narrow definition of ‘democratic practice’ (Bessant, 2004: 398). This project will utilise the term ‘democracy’ in the context of PRIA’s work to refer to: ‘democracy in action: people working together to change their communities and society for the better’ (Harkavy, Hartley, 2009: 9). Youth involvement in democratic practices within the development space: ‘owes much of its persuasiveness to talk about reciprocity, fairness, obligation, and social responsibility’ (Bessant, 2004: 401); the literature often ignores barriers to involvement in democratic practices that youth face such as the right to vote, freedom of movement, and access to employment. Harkavy and Hartley’s article on youth development and democratic renewal (2009) argues that youth involvement in democratic practices are there for the purpose of: ‘building civic capacity’ (9). This article links the youth civic engagement literature to ideas of democratic participation to argue that young people’s role in democracy should be in a civic engagement position, as such projects: ‘contributing to the well-being of people in the community through structural community improvement should be a central goal of a truly democratic partnership for the public good’ (Harkavy, Hartley, 2009: 12), alongside the argument that: ‘youth civic engagement can also enhance the democratic process by bringing new energy, ideas and perspectives’ (Brady et al., 2012: 19).

Although this research project does not follow one specific definition of democracy due to the exploration of the fellows’ understanding of the concept, it will draw on the idea that: ‘democracy is more than a collection of specific institutions, such as balloting and elections – these institutions are important too, but as parts of a bigger engagement involving dialogue,
freedom of information, and unrestricted discussion’ (Sen, 2011: 2). It is these practices of democracy in everyday life - open conversation and inclusive debate - that PRIA champions, as the research demonstrates, and will inform the understanding of democracy throughout this research. In Sen’s work on democracy in India, he emphasises the connection between democracy, youth, and identity in his work on peace and democratic society (2011); Brady et al agree, arguing: ‘the active involvement of individuals is important for society as it enhances the vibrancy of democracy’ (2012: 10). PRIA follows a similar approach in their YnD program: ‘It needs to be understood that the identity of the young Indians has direct impacts on the democratic well-being of the country’ (2019: 3). This view that democracy is more than an individualistic, bureaucratic practice and requires knowledge of not only your own circumstance but others is evident throughout the literature used by PRIA to inform their sessions, and through the participants’ responses.

3. Methodology
This research project used qualitative methods and hoped to focus on aspects of participatory research; however, the ongoing global pandemic has made it difficult to carry out this approach. As ‘participatory research is not an individual exercise’ (Tandon, 1985: 266), this research has attempted to collaborate with PRIA staff members and fellows through online sessions and meetings to ensure aspects of participatory research remain. As this research is exploring an existing program, an evaluative methodology, coupled with critical analysis of the data, will be most relevant. There are a lack of quantitative research of civic engagement and youth participation within the relevant literature due to the difficulty in measuring terms such as ‘civic engagement’ and ‘democratic participation’; qualitative methods are better suited to this topic, Levinson argues (2010).

The qualitative approach chosen to help answer the research question was multiple, in-depth interviews; this work relied on semi-structured interviews – ten fellow and three staff interviews from the ‘YnD’ program - that informed an evaluative methodological approach to the research question. An introductory session over Zoom took place before the individual interviews to explain the project and introduce the researcher, allowing fellows the time to decide if they would like to participate while simultaneously beginning to build connections between the
potential participants and the researcher. As the research took place remotely, it relied on the supervisors of the YnD program to make introductions over email between the researcher and the participants. The use of a gatekeeper to build a connection could present some bias due to the lack of choice the researcher had in choosing the participants; however the circumstances made this the only option. Participants were chosen by PRIA due in part to their confidence speaking in English; the sample size was dictated by willing fellows and the time constraints of this project. Each interviewee was provided with a participant information sheet (Appendix 7.A) and asked to sign a consent form to ensure they understood the ethical considerations (Appendix 7.C) this research posed. From this, two fellows decided they would not like to participate. These interviews took place over Skype, WhatsApp and Zoom, and each interview consisted of around 10 questions (Appendix 7.B), which were altered depending on who was being interviewed, as well as throughout the research process as the topic became more focused. These interviews varied in length from 30 minutes to over an hour, and each session was recorded and then transcribed using an online platform, and critical analysis was applied; this approach was used to: ‘identify ways in which material conditions (economic, political, gender, ethnic) influence beliefs, behaviour, and experiences’ (Ritchie, Lewis, 2003: 12). Following this approach, the data was coded into themes by the research by searching for key words and concepts in the data manually and grouping them together, and the data was anonymised for this report. Numbers were assigned to each participant at random for confidentiality, and indicators such as gender were removed. Due to the small scale of this project, not all coded data was used. The key informant interviews were used to narrow the scope of the project toward themes of self and identity, and the questions were thereafter guided by this focus.

4. Results and Discussion
The resulting data collected from the interviews was coded into themes: self, identity, democracy, motivations, outcomes, and interaction with wider society. During preliminary conversations with members of staff at PRIA, it became evident that they were interested in how the sessions on Self and Identity informed and shaped democratic participation in the wider community. The fellows’ social action projects gave an opportunity for this query to be examined. The results will question how the fellows have become more active democratic participants through their application of what PRIA has supported during the Self and Identity
modules to their subsequent social action projects. It will examine understandings of self and identity, examples of social action projects, and the fellows’ changing attitudes towards democracy to answer this question. A discussion of how the results answer the research question is included alongside the results of the interviews.

a. Understanding Self and Identity

The majority of fellows interviewed were of the same mindset when beginning the self and identity modules of the fellowship: ‘I thought, what is there to think about self, we know ourselves’ (Participant 1). For one fellow, questions of identity were a reminder that: ‘we always have to introduce yourself when we meet someone for the first time. Introducing oneself is one hell of a task, it comes with hesitation and lots with thinking. Before the self and identity session with PRIA I hated introducing myself’ (P8). Despite the negative or non-existent connotations of the concepts before, all ten fellows interviewed cited the modules on Self and Identity when asked which module they found the most impactful or interesting. Reasonings on why this module was the most enjoyed and valued ranged from: ‘I got to know too many things about myself’ (P4), to arguing that: ‘the Identity module was my favourite, because it really made me introspective’ (P6).

There was widespread agreement that the modules were so interesting and uniquely impactful because they approached not only the subject but learning the subject in a completely different way. One example of this was an exercise done to encourage the fellows to consider the multiple identities they consist of, in which four fellows referenced as an important moment for them in the fellowship. The art-based activity saw the fellows decorating masks with phrases or words on both sides to depict ‘inner’ self and ‘outer’ self. This task was the first introduction to the fellows on how people and environments can alter ideas and perceptions of self or identity. PRIA’s linking of self and identity to the wider society began the process of creating more actively democratic participants. Through examining if the fellows had come across the ideas before, this research aimed to determine if PRIA’s involvement was the main source of understanding self and identity concepts; the research argues for this theory.
Self, for the fellows, was seen as ‘shaped by the social environment, but it is more of an internal, intrinsic thing. So, my thought process of how I feel, how I see things and how I perceive things, so this is all what constitutes the self’ (P3). Self as an internal and individual practice was echoed by other fellows, who explain that: ‘how I see myself, how I see my self-image, my self-esteem, how I see myself before windows’ (P4). These explanations mimic internal documents and academic work provided by PRIA on understandings of self, arguing that the organisation’s approach to teaching impacted the fellows’ perception of self.

When asked how to describe identity, the fellows did not give such a clear, singular answer in comparison to the answers on self. Most participants understood identity as a product of the wider environment, believing identities to be more connected to others: ‘identities are how I perceive others, or like how I'm going to depict myself before you, or something like that’ (P4). Others saw identity as more connected to self than the environment in which one is created, arguing that ‘identity, you can say, is a part of self because how I look up to myself or how I feel that I am, that is like an identity which is of self’ (P5). Similarly, another fellow explains identity as: ‘for sure your identity piece comes constructed out of yourself. But you might not consider a lot of your aspects as your identity, but they're still a part of yourself’ (P6). One of the supervisors for the YnD program highlights identity as consisting of gender, sexuality, languages, caste, in comparison to identity being about how ‘they view themselves’ (P12). The Identity module encouraged levels of introspection, with one participant realising that they: ‘have a lot of privileges, I could identify myself as, you know, a very privileged woman in India’ (P3). Arguably, the Identity module had more impact on the choices of social action projects than Self, as discussions of gender in particular throughout the sessions sparked further interest to practically apply these ideas in the field.

b. Social Action Projects
The final module of the fellowship, Change, consists of a social action project of the fellows’ choosing on a social issue in the community that they find the most relevant or interesting. The fellows were asked to discuss their motivation behind choosing their topic, and how they planned to carry out the fieldwork. The outbreak of the pandemic affected most peoples’ plans and when
social action projects were altered and carried out online as an alternative, these changed plans were also discussed.

One participant describes living ‘a very sheltered life’ with no exposure to ‘feminism or politics’ (P6) which pushed them to study journalism and politics to fill in the knowledge gaps; the fellowship presented an opportunity to explore social issues in depth. The interview brought up a conversation had during their social action project on promoting gender equality through education and family planning in a Delhi slum: ‘she had these stereotypes about women in her own head that women are very passive and submissive, they don't like to go out and do stuff’ (P6). The social action project hoped to ‘initiate conversations about gender inequality in people's homes and how they faced it, I did well-researched posts about a lot of stigma related to gender equality’ (P6). Having spoken previously in the conversation about understandings of self and identity, they linked their social action project to discussions of stereotyping in self and identity sessions run by PRIA: ‘We were actually trained in a very open manner. So, it did, very consciously, come into my head, I did actually think that it was sort of aligning with what I've been taught previously’ (P6). This example illustrates the use of the social action project to apply concepts learned in the Self and Identity modules to practices of civic engagement and democratic participation successfully.

In comparison, two participants in the fellowship chose to do their social action project on male sexual abuse, as ‘males have to, you know, be masculine’ (P3) and these stereotypes make males hesitant to speak out about abuse. Their decision to take this social action project forward stemmed directly from the Self and Identity modules: ‘the idea of my research project which I'm working on is Sexual Abuse, which also came through this [self] module’ (P3). One fellow describes the activity on identity used to question preconceived stigmas, which involved a discussion on stereotypical words associated with genders. A fellow described the activity as being given words such as ‘soft’ or ‘strong’ and asked as groups to place the words in a ‘feminine’ or a ‘masculine’ category. The purpose of this task, explains the fellow, was to make the participants question their own ingrained stereotypes, before questioning the environments in which they learned them (P1). The social action project was chosen to share the learnings of this Identity session wider. The fellow describes how, in the future, ‘I will make sure that I created an
environment for my own family so that people can really open up and talk very, frankly, without thinking of any prejudices and you know, all the judgments that are out there’ (P3). Again, this direct application of knowledge of identity was used to promote equality and open dialogue: pillars of democracy.

The social action project, in one case, gave a participant a new aspect to their identity: ‘I have done my livelihood project [and] that gave me an identity that is doing good work’ (P11). This response combines youth civic engagement ideas of volunteering in the community with PRIA’s use of Self and Identity teachings to promote more active participation in democracy, in this case through the social action project. The fellow has given food and monetary assistance to 30 families in need individually; the direct positive impact on the community informed the fellows’ identity, which illustrates that PRIA’s program can also work in reverse: democratic participation can encourage ideas of identity within the people involved.

c. Democracy
The fellows were asked about their experiences practicing democracy before the fellowship and how this might have changed as a result of the program; they were also asked to define their understanding of “practicing” democracy. Participants were also asked how they believed PRIA understood and practiced democracy both within the fellowship and throughout the organization. This research purposefully avoids defining ‘democracy’ fully, allowing the fellows’ changing understandings and definitions to argue for the varied approaches to the concept. This idea is reflected by the fellows themselves, when discussing the participatory element of this research: ‘I've got to know from people that their idea of democracy is not the same as my idea of democracy which was quite relevant’ (P1). From the fellows’ responses, the research showed that while democracy was not a prominent feature of life before joining the fellowship, the democratic interactions they had were understood as a bureaucratic practice, specific to government and voting: ‘democracy was only related to your voting, right? Which is still there, like I am 21 and I have given my vote. But democracy for many people here is only related to voting. That's all’ (P1). One fellow admitted to no interactions with the practice before the fellowship: ‘for me before, I had never given a thought of what a democracy is’ (P3). Another practice came from a personal level: ‘the highest level of democracy I practice is in my home.
My decisions of the home, I’ve got the freedom of speech, I’ve got the freedom to move wherever I wanted to’ (P1). This individualistic approach to the practice is focused on the self, and not actively on the wider interaction and impact on the society, as was their previous approach, this participant admits.

One fellow described PRIA’s approach as an organisation as: ‘practicing democracy at each and every level of their program’ (P1). Further probing of this topic with the fellows provided examples of this democratic culture that has been created by PRIA, such as: ‘you have all the opportunities to express yourself, plus everyone was treated equally, everyone was given equal chances’ (P1). A participant describes how the fellowship’s focus on self and identity coupled with the level of diversity amongst the fellows pushed him to continuously ‘questioning what I knew, and then refining my thoughts’ (P5). The focus on diversity is highlighted by another fellow: ‘there's a huge diversity of people in PRIA. You have people from across the country, though more people are from the northern part, and there are people with different sexual orientations’ (P2). The equality and diversity of the program are coupled with a participatory approach to the fellowship: ‘the very best thing that PRIA are doing during this fellowship is ensuring that the democratic participation for all the fellows is there, because they never, you know, they never told us they always asked us’ (P3). One of the facilitators for the organisation explained PRIA’s approach to democracy as: ‘not just elections, not just parliamentary elections, it happens every day, affects all of us, it’s taking decisions on education, what food we want to eat’ (P12). The elements that PRIA both teaches and promotes as an organisation demonstrate how democratic practices are not necessarily linked to voting or government, an approach that has impacted how the fellows actively participate in democracy.

Within the literature on youth involvement in democracy, Bessant argues that: ‘democratic practice rests on the existence of certain institutions and a guarantee to observe basic human rights’ (2004: 398). Data gathered on how the fellows’ feel their approach to democracy has changed reflects this observation of basic human rights. One participant, who admits to have previously been less liberal-thinking than their peers, expressed that: ‘I think letting people have their rights, letting people have their own opinions, have their freedom of speech and have the right to access information’ (P2) was what practicing democracy looked like. Coming from
Kashmir, their experience of democracy was having no choice, even: ‘in decisions where we are the major stakeholder’ (P2). A session on stakeholder analysis, during the Identity module, had the most impact on the fellow. This fellow chose to work on the issue of fake news for their social action project, hoping to teach people around them how to spot misinformation. They were motivated by the role misinformation and WhatsApp fake news threads played in the previous election, as ‘57% of Indians encounter fake news’ (P2), and decided if they could stop the chain of misinformation for the people around them, it would have a wider impact beyond that. Becoming more open toward others’ beliefs and opinions is a key marker of civic engagement, which includes: ‘expression of democratic values including toleration’ (Levinson, 2010: 321). This further supports the claim that PRIA supports active participation and civic engagement with their YnD program.

An awareness of the internal shift in understanding of ‘democracy’ is prominent: ‘So [before] I was not practicing democracy and like, being silent is not, it's not always an option. You need to speak up and raise issues’ (P4). This move toward democracy as a way to campaign for others is a prominent theme through the data collected, with one participant asking: ‘So how can I ensure that all the 1.3 billion people of India can participate? How can we ensure the participation of all the people in policymaking?’ (P3), when before they had only been to a protest and did not actively participate in democracy any further. The participation and inclusive rhetoric are reflected in other participant answers: ‘What democracy means to me right now, in this moment, I believe, is that I'm able to talk somewhat freely without any stereotype, without any fear of what might happen’ (P9). The intersection between self and identity and democratic practices was more understood: ‘we now specifically want to make a difference to how democracy functions, like how people understand things’ (P5). The act of civic engagement, wanting to assist others in furthering themselves, in combination with taking an active interest in democratic participation, continues to emphasise how PRIA influenced the fellows’ interactions with the wider community. This argument ties in with the idea of civic engagement as the term, ‘in essence, has to do with a person’s ‘outward looking’’ (Brady et.al, 2012: 4).
5. Conclusion

This research project looked to explore “youth” and their understandings of “democracy” through teachings of Self and Identity within PRIA’s ‘Youth-n-Democracy’ Fellowship, by questioning how the fellows have become more active democratic participants through their application of their reflections on the Self and Identity modules to their subsequent social action projects. Through 13 interviews with both fellows and staff members who acted as key informants, this project drew upon evaluative methodologies and qualitative methods to critically analyse the data collected through the semi-structured interviews. The research was supported by academic literature on youth and democracy in the development space and the Indian context. The literature on civic engagement and active citizenship gave grounding to PRIA’s approach to engaging these youth in democratic practices. By questioning how fellows understood self, identity, and democracy before joining the fellowship, the research confirmed that PRIA was responsible for the fellows’ new understandings. The research argues that by encouraging an engagement with and reflection on ideas of self and identity within the fellows made them more compassionate and open to other people’s opinions and beliefs, and in turn more eager to fight for equality and democracy, as demonstrated through their social action projects. Specific examples of social action projects on the subjects of gender equality, male sexual abuse, and the livelihood project illustrated how concepts from the self and identity module directly informed these involvements in the wider community. Drawing on the ideas of active participants in democracy, it can be argued that these examples show youth civic engagement and, therefore, democratic participation. PRIA is credited by each of the fellows for establishing this link and supporting ideas of self and identity to inform democratic understandings.

This project would benefit from further interviews and study with the existing fellows, as the research was conducted during their final months with the nine-month program and therefore the participants had no time for reflection before taking part in the research. As many of the fellows are still students, they are at an early stage in adulthood development and therefore it would be interesting to consider how the fellows take forward the ideas from the fellowship into an employment or further education setting. Another limitation of the study was the lack of material and consideration for the impact of gender, race, or socio-economic status on the fellows; this was due to the small scale of this report and the decision to focus on themes of self, identity, and
democracy. This study is focused on how the fellows interacted with the wider community; a further study to address their presence in such communities by the people collaborated with would be informative to this study.
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7. Appendix

a. Participant Information Form

1. **Title of study:** An examination of leadership and democracy within PRIA’s ‘Youth ‘n’ Democracy’ fellowship program

2. **Details:** Tess Westbrook, Trinity College Dublin; Nikita Rakhyani, PRIA; Youth n Democracy

3. **Introduction:** This research will examine ideas of leadership and uses of democracy within different spaces through interviews with fellows of PRIA’s ‘Youth-n-Democracy’ program. The interviews will be conducted over skype or a similar online video platform.

4. **Procedures:** You must be a fellow in PRIA’s ‘Youth n Democracy’ program or have acute knowledge of the program. Staff members at PRIA are included. If selected, this study will consist of at least one interview to be held on skype or a similar platform around understandings of leadership and democracy. Your involvement in the Youth n Democracy fellowship will be the focus. If willing, further interviews will be held to gain more research material.

5. **Benefits:** This study will allow PRIA to examine how the Youth n Democracy fellowship is shaping ideas of democracy and leadership and what the fellows are taking from it. This may help to improve the program later.

6. **Risks:** Risks include the participant feeling undue pressure by their relationship to the organization and my supervisor and potentially incriminating themselves. It is with this in mind that I will ensure participants are aware that PRIA will have access to information involving how the fellowship is creating a democratic culture for these young students across different spaces and how well the idea of democracy in everyday life is being perceived and practiced by them. For my research, their details will be anonymized and participation is voluntary.

7. **Exclusion from participation:** This study is voluntary and exclusion is allowed at any time.

8. **Confidentiality:** Your identity will remain confidential. Your name will not be published and will not be disclosed to anyone outside the study. All answers will be anonymized.

9. **Voluntary Participation:** You have volunteered to participate in this study. You may quit at any time. If you decide not to participate, or if you quit, you will not be penalised and will not give up any benefits which you had before entering the study.

10. **Reimbursements:** N/A
11. Stopping the study: You understand that the researcher may stop your participation in the study at any time without your consent.

12. Permission: This study has School of Natural Sciences Research Ethics Committee approval. I am working under and supervised on PRIA’s code of conduct.

13. Access to data: You can access their own data at any time under GDPR guidelines.

14. Sharing the results: The research results will be shared with the participants and community before publication.

15. Further information: You can get more information or answers to your questions about the study, your participation in the study, and your rights, from Dr Robbie Gilligan, who can be emailed at: Robbie.gilligan@tcd.ie

b. Interview Questions – Fellows

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your background and home town?
   a. Where are you from?
   b. Is it rural or urban? How many people?
   c. Did you go to school in your town? What was the school like?
   d. Is there a trend of people in your family being active in democracy or leadership?

2. What did you study at university and why did you choose to study this?

3. Where did you learn about the ‘youth n democracy’ fellowship?

4. What made you decide to apply and then join the fellowship?

5. What was your first impression of the fellowship and the fellows and has that changed?

6. What has the most interesting or informative bloc within the fellowship been for you?

7. What do you understand by “practicing” democracy?

8. Could you describe a time when you practiced democracy?

9. Do you feel your engagement with democracy has changed since becoming a fellow?

10. Could you describe your use of democracy before becoming a fellow and your predictions for your use of democracy after the fellowship?

11. Could you explain how PRIA understands democracy?

12. Can you talk about your social action project and the motivation behind it, and perhaps how you plan on overcoming the obstacle of COVID-19 in order to continue to pursue this project.
a. How did you come to work with your mentor?
b. In what ways do they support you and your work?
c. How are you received by the communities you work with? Are people open and willing to interact?
d. Do you feel your issue is more prevalent in India?
e. How do you feel your work in general is impacting the wider youth community?

13. The fellowship teaches modules on self and identity:
   a. Did you consider ideas of self and identity before joining the fellowship?
   b. What do you understand by “self”? (collective v. individual self)
   c. and identity?
   d. Could you describe the difference in the two concepts, if you believe there is one?

14. What are your hopes for the future, both personal and in relation to what the fellowship has taught you?

Interview Questions – Key Informants

1. What is your position within PRIA?
2. Can you start by talking through your background, both education and professional?
3. Why do you think PRIA was formed?
4. Before joining PRIA, how did you participate in or understand democracy?
   a. What do you understand by “practicing” democracy?
   b. Has this changed since starting your position at PRIA?
5. Could you explain how PRIA understands democracy?
6. How does PRIA support democracy?
7. Can you explain how PRIA understand leadership/ what makes a good leader?
8. How does PRIA support leadership skills?
9. Do you think there is a connection between leadership and democracy? Could you explain this connection?
10. How do you think PRIA supports this connection?
11. Could you talk through the fellowship program:
    a. What qualities does PRIA look for in a fellow?
    b. How do you ensure equal representation when selecting the fellows?
c. How do you choose the session themes for the fellows to focus on?
d. Social action projects: how are they decided, how much connection do they have
to outside NGOs, role of mentors, funding?
e. What indicators do you look for to show that the fellowship is having an impact
on the students?

12. How do you feel PRIA’s approach to development and democracy building both
theoretically and in practice differ from similar organisations?

13. How will the development sector of India suffer if PRIA was not there?

14. How do you hope the fellowship will impact the wider community of young people in
India?

15. What do you hope for the fellows in the future, both personally and professionally?