



# PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: Global Citizenship Education Plus

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# Where I am coming from

- Academic/teaching background  
(conflict, extremism, fragile states)  
Research interviewing former extremists
- Director of social enterprise **Connectfutures**  
Includes
  - Connectlearning*: training on PVE
  - Connectcommunities*: group youth projects
  - Connectjustice*: research, filmmaking



connect**futures**

# What is violent extremism?

The beliefs and actions of sub-state groups who support and use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. This includes terrorism and other forms of politically motivated and sectarian violence. An enemy or enemies are usually identified who are the subject of the hatred and violence.

# What is terrorism?

- The deliberate creation and exploitation of fear in order to advance a political, racial or ideological cause; the use of terror – generally combined with open violence - against civilians which attempts to force people, authorities or government to change their behaviours.

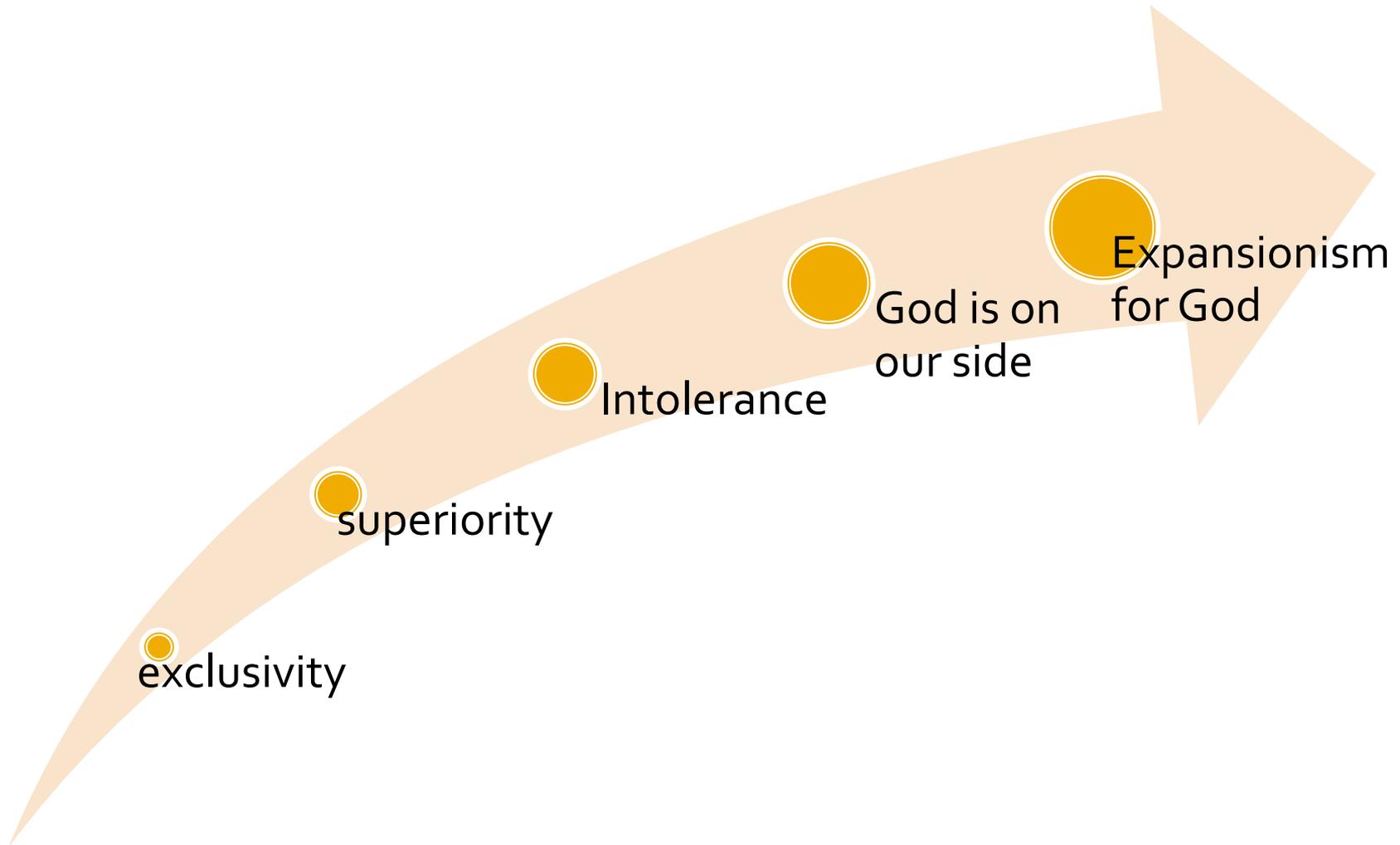
# Extremist mindsets

- Narrowing of focus
- Linear concept of the 'end-time', a Utopian vision to be achieved
- Acceptance of binary, black and white 'truths', good and evil, 'us' and 'them'
- Not just stereotyping, but 'them' as an enemy to be hated, actively fought
- Violence can become justified
- Aim to polarise communities, shatter 'the grey zone of empathy, respect and tolerance'

# Formers and families research: black and white truths

- *He does get angry... politically and Islamically.... he was very divisive at that stage. And very two tone: black and white, right and wrong, and Islam, tawhid and shirk. And there's nothing in the grey. There's no middle ground there.*
- *You should be able to show your hatred and your enmity towards the non-Muslims. If you cannot do that then you are not showing your Islam.*

# Why religion is particularly risky in conflict: the amplification spiral



# Aims of PVE

- Drain the human resources of extremist groups by preventing people joining or supporting them
- Retain or restore complexity in thinking
- Unlearning of prejudice/factual errors
- Generate counter-narratives
- Mentoring those at risk
- Providing different life chances for those already radicalised
- Encourage active challenge to violence

# Diversity is all

- The one vulnerability of ISIS, AQ. Neo-Nazi groups etc. is their lack of diversity
- Narrow range of people who accept the ideology
- Lack of negotiating and compromising power
- Burkini bans: a hard secularism which is equally lacking in diversity, only amplifies tensions
- Assimilationist policies trying to make people more the same are not the answer

# Educational strategies

There is no one route into extremism; you cannot target families nor easily spot the vulnerable.

Therefore the strategy is to work with *all* learners.

- Value pluralism: shaking it all up
- Building confidence
- Encounters with 'strangers'
- Taking action

**TURBULENCE**



**CONFIDENCE**

CONFIDENCE



**ENCOUNTERS**



**TAKING  
ACTION**



# Integrative complexity (IC)

- The mind simplifies thinking in response to a perceived threat to values and stress
- Such simplified thinking characterises extremism. Violent extremists have even lower complexity and exhibit 'value monism'
- When political actors' IC drops from baseline, real world conflict is predicted within weeks
- IC programmes in schools and with youth across the world use 'hot' issues to generate multiple viewpoints and integrate values

# Complexity mindsets

- Value pluralism, healthy doubt, comfort with ambiguity, own values revisable
- Experimentation, seeing mistakes as information, being happy with divergence
- Short term goals, constant revisions
- Multiple connectivity and consultation across levels
- 'Principled pragmatism' in political organisation

# ConnectFutures: Theory of Change in our training

- Increase **complexity** in thinking, break down binaries and value monism (debates, discussions, life narratives, hot topics)
- Increase **confidence** and ability to speak your **voice** (role plays, games, media training, Twitter, filming)
- Expand **networks** and the horizon space (encounters across schools and communities; problem-solving with the police)
- Tools for **participation** (volunteering, campaigning, National Citizen Service, citizen research, crowdfunding)



# PERSUASION

language conviction  
images knowledge (facts/stats) character  
praise (smiley face) repetition  
quilt/moral reasoning (sad face) listening  
seeds of doubt (sad face) throwback  
empathy (sad face)



## Speak for Yourself Project



I learnt how to argue for something I don't believe in

Engaging

It was great looking at different packages

How to write a persuasive argument

Impressive session! I learnt how to debate effectively

Learned how to answer questions on the spot

Looking at different ways to persuade people

Great session

I found to think more variety of people

Found the counter-arguing hard

Quick-fire questions

Excited

Very practical

I liked debating a wide range of topics in a hearing form of viewpoint

Want to make my own

Competitive

Yes but better

# Speak for Yourself

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## Weekend debate topics

- Britain is full – close the borders
- Should animal testing be banned?
- Is violence sometimes justified?
- Are faith schools still relevant in a secular society?

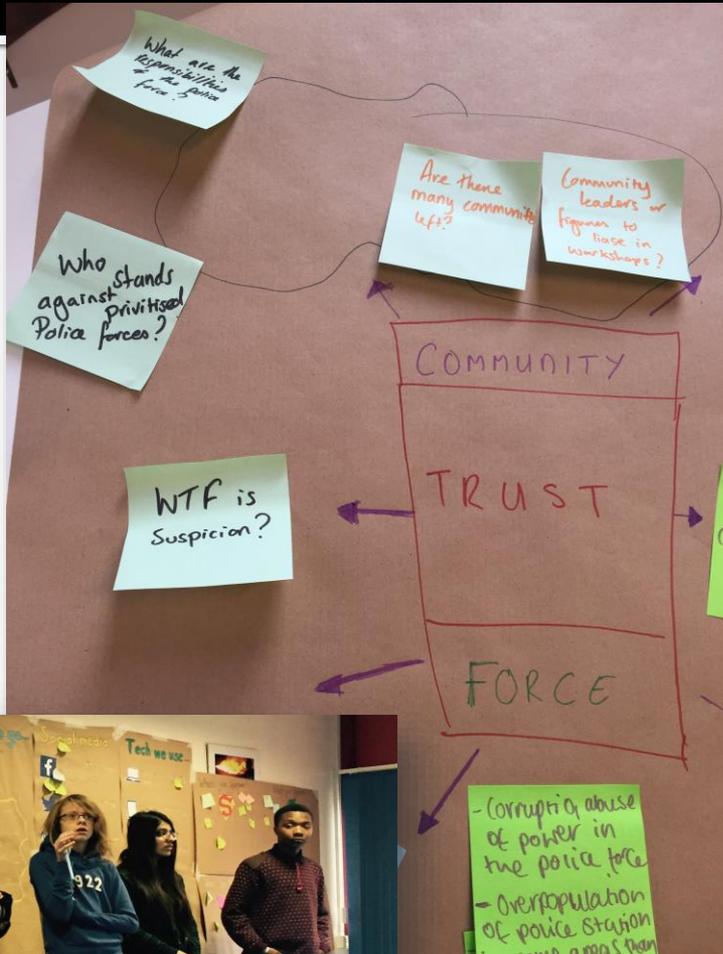
# The Big Debate



# Encounters with strangers

- Preventing lock-in to narrow ideologies needs constant exposure to a range of diverse views
- Need encounters with difference – with people, with texts, with ideas. Not similar minded people: clashes of values are important for challenging extremism
- Refinement of the 'contact hypothesis' – not enough just to bring people together, but for them to work together for a common goal (e.g. N. Ireland, Sri Lanka, police/community)

# Unity Jam with the local police



- trust issues with police  
- police are intimidating  
- people do not like talking to police when they are approached

It should be made illegal for Police Officers to read the Daily Mail.



# New networking

- Young people are both producers and receivers of information
- The new democracy is less about elections and more about tweeting and retweeting of ideas
- The 'strength of weak ties' – we learn more from acquaintances than from close friends and closed networks
- Horizontalism provides the most useful methods for people with no power

# Example: U-Report

- U-report is a free SMS/Twitter based system that allows young people across the world to speak out about what is happening in their communities; reporting on early marriage, FGM, domestic violence, climate change, sharing knowledge of the law, cyber-bullying
- An amplifying and horizontal movement.  
2,588,121 members, growing by 500 a day
- Started in Uganda, now 23 countries

# Action and activism

- Fuzzy preferences – discovering preferences through action, rather than acting on the basis of preference.
- So need to change or influence the action
- Political, civic and social activism can channel energy and youthful disaffection; research found young Muslims in UK could be diverted from violence when provided with peaceful, meaningful alternatives
- Teachers 'letting go' to find authentic ways to support young people as active citizens.

# Permanent shifts

- Social media redefines the individual as someone who is participating in the sharing of information, not just receiving it, and thereby whose image of themselves is shifted/transformed.
- *David Meyer*: By engaging in activism, an individual creates himself or herself as a subject, rather than simply an object, in history and . . . is unlikely to retreat to passive acceptance of the world as it is.

# Enabling Constraints: Rights

- Value pluralism NOT the same as cultural relativism
- Framework needed on what to respect and what to disrespect
- Rights are the best we have: secular base which cuts across all religions and none
- Knowledge of rights enables confidence to challenge injustice, but also restrains violence and harm

# Global Citizenship Education Plus

## KEY GCE LEARNING OUTCOMES

## A SPECIFIC FOCUS ON PVE

### 1. ***COGNITIVE outcomes***

- Learners acquire knowledge and understanding of local, national and global issues; interconnectedness of countries and people
- Learners develop skills for critical thinking and analysis

- Learners acquire knowledge of conflict and extremism, and how they affect us all
- Learners develop and retain complex cognitive structures to combat rigid, binary thinking

## ***2. SOCIO-EMOTIONAL Outcomes***

### **GCE OUTCOMES**

- Learners experience a sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values, based on human rights
- Learners develop empathy, solidarity, respect for diversity

### **GCE PLUS for PVE**

- Learners understand common vulnerabilities and multiple identities
- Learners develop value pluralism, including values of extremists, while using a rights framework to decide among competing values

### 3. ***BEHAVIOURAL outcomes***

#### **GCE Outcomes**

- Learners act effectively at local, national and global levels for a more peaceful and sustainable world
- Learners develop motivation to take necessary action

#### **GCE Plus for PVE**

- Learners acquire skills to create social change without violence
- Learners take responsibility to try to combat racism, sectarianism and hatred

# C<sub>3</sub>E for GCE for PVE

*Enabling*

Complex

Confidence building

Campaigning

Encountering

*Constraints*