Character Education for Social Action: Conceptualizing and Cultivating a Habit of Social Action

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Draft in progress

Abstract: Governments, schools, and non-profit organizations have recently sought to encourage social action among young people in the UK. Yet these efforts occasionally lack a cohesive framework for conceptualizing and cultivating social action as an enduring habit, even as they aspire to do so in practice. This paper argues that an Aristotelian account of character education can supply a valuable conceptual framework for identifying and developing a habit of social action. To illustrate, we draw on a case study of #iwill, a cross-sector, cross-party collective impact campaign that encourages youth social action in the UK. Analysing the #iwill campaign's six principles of quality service and its outcomes framework, we show how an Aristotelian account can offer useful resources for supporting reflective and impactful social action.

Introduction: Youth Social Action in the UK

In recent decades, governments, schools, and non-profit organizations in the UK have actively encouraged social action among young people.[1] One of the UK's most significant initiatives is the #iwill campaign, a collective impact campaign that aims to improve the quality of social action opportunities, shrink the socioeconomic gap in participation, and increase participation in 'meaningful' social action[2] among 10-20 year olds to 60% by 2020 (up from 40% in 2014).[3] #iwill was established in 2013 following a review commissioned by then UK Prime Minister David Cameron into how sectors could work together to increase youth social action. The #iwill campaign—which now comprises over 700 partner organisations nationwide—enjoys cross-party support. It is backed by HRH The Prince of Wales and was referenced in the manifestos of both the Conservative and Labour party before the 2015 election (#iwill, 2017).

Coordinated by the charity Step Up To Serve, the broad aim of the #iwill campaign is to make social action a 'habit for life' (Step Up To Serve, 2014). Given the ambitious target and scope of their efforts, their widespread support, and their sophisticated conceptual framework for social action—including their six quality principles and framework for individual and community

[1] 'Social action' broadly refers to activities that people perform to help others and engage their communities and environment. In the UK, 'social action' is an umbrella term for a wide range of activities and often used interchangeably with terms such as 'volunteering', 'service', and 'civic engagement'.

[2] A young person who has participated in 'meaningful' social action has taken part in social action in the past 12 months at least every few months, or in a one-off activity lasting more than a day, and has recognised the benefit to both themselves and others or the environment as a result of their social action.

[3] #iwill is based on a collective impact model that reflects 'the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem' (Kania and Kramer, 2011, p. 36).

outcomes—the #iwill campaign constitutes a valuable object of analysis and a useful model for other organizations to potentially emulate. Closer analysis of #iwill's framework, however, reveals conceptual challenges in integrating and applying parts of the model. This paper argues that an Aristotelian framework for character education can help to address these challenges.

The argument proceeds in three parts. Part I presents a case study of the #iwill campaign and its 'six quality principles' as they relate to developing social action as a 'habit for life'. Part II identifies four aspects of #iwill's framework that would benefit from additional conceptual clarity. Part III highlights how an Aristotelian account of virtue clarifies and expands #iwill's six quality principles and addresses the four challenges of conceptualizing and cultivating a habit of social action.

Part I: A Case Study of the #iwill Campaign

#iwill's Three-Part Framework

The #iwill campaign is informed by extensive research into how to ensure both the quality and impact of social action. In the early days of the #iwill campaign, stakeholders from the voluntary, education, and business sectors—coordinated by The Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) and The Young Foundation—undertook a literature review on social action, conducted interviews with stakeholders, and studied 50 existing quality assurance frameworks to develop a quality framework for youth social action. They developed a three-part framework that includes (1) a definition of social action, (2) an outcomes framework for individuals and the community, and (3) six quality principles that 'define great youth social action' (The Campaign for Youth Social Action, 2013a, p. 6).

Based on this research, the #iwill campaign defined social action as 'young people taking practical action in the service of others in order to create positive social change that is of benefit to the wider community as well as to the young person themselves' (The Campaign for Youth Social Action, 2013a, p. 6). Central to this definition and to the campaign's definition of 'meaningful' social action is the concept of a 'double benefit', whereby social action benefits both the person helping and the community, cause, or person being helped.[4]

To capture this double-benefit model, #iwill developed a framework for individual and community outcomes, represented in Figure 1. The outcomes for individual participants, drawn from frameworks developed by McNeil, Reeder, and Rich (2012) and the CBI (2012), are grouped into three categories: 1) optimism (communication and creativity), 2) determination (confidence and agency, planning and problem solving, and resilience and grit), and 3) emotional intelligence (leadership, relationships, managing feelings, and self-control). The community outcomes are broader than these individual outcomes and include benefits ranging from increased voting and civic participation to better health, employability, and educational engagement (The Campaign for Youth Social Action, 2013b, p. 12).

[4] Snyder and Omoto define social action as people 'working alone and working together, often in attempts to benefit themselves and society', and as a social phenomenon (2007, p. 955).

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Benefits for the individual</th><th>Benefits for the community</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Optimism</td><td>Communication</td><td rowspan="8">Can be wide-ranging, from civic participation, health, educational engagement to safer communities, sustainability, voting, resilience and employability.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Creativity</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Determination</td><td>Confidence and Agency</td></tr>
<tr><td>Planning and Problem solving</td></tr>
<tr><td>Resilience, Grit</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Emotional Intelligence</td><td>Leadership</td></tr>
<tr><td>Relationships</td></tr>
<tr><td>Managing feelings, Self control</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 1: An outcomes framework for benefits to the individual and community (The Campaign for Youth Social Action, 2013a, p. 7)

Significant work has been directed toward understanding these principles in more detail and supporting organisations to build them into their programmes. This work is evidenced by research on how the principles are applied in practice (Generation Change, 2014), studies analysing the link between quality and inclusion (Bown, Harflett and Gitsham, 2014), investigations into how social action providers and participants conceptualize character (Arthur, Harrison and Taylor, 2015), and ongoing development of ‘quality marks’ for youth social action programmes (Ambition UK, 2017; Generation Change, 2016).

To achieve benefits to both individuals and communities, #iwill developed six principles of quality social action. According to their model, quality social action is 1) reflective, 2) challenging, 3) youth-led, 4) socially impactful, 5) progressive, and 6) embedded.[5] To explore how these principles fit into an Aristotelian framework of character education, a brief explanation of the theoretical rationale and practical manifestations of the six quality principles is instructive.

[5] While the #iwill campaign aims to encourage both formal opportunities offered by a school or organization and youth-directed initiatives or informal activities, these principles are more applicable to the former.

Figure 2: The six quality principles of youth social action (Step Up To Serve, 2014)

#iwill's Six Quality Principles

1. Progressive

The first quality principle of youth social action is that the activity ought to be 'progressive', or sustained and developed over time. The progressive principle entails that young people should be directed to multiple opportunities for ongoing social action in a community so that they are engaged in a 'journey' rather than a one-off experience (Generation Change, 2014, p. 16).[6]

In practice, social action providers have created 'engagement pathways' that guide students through social action projects that require 'increasing levels of responsibility' (Generation Change, 2014: 21). One social action provider—The Key: Your Potential Unlocked—uses a 4-stage approach where students must complete work at the lowest stage before progressing to higher stage projects that are increasingly challenging (Generation Change, 2014, p. 21). Other programs capture the progressive element of youth social action in less formal ways. Some, for example, have mentors and coaches that 'support young people to take the next step' upon completing a project, while others contextualize the social action of younger members by showcasing program alumni or highlighting valuable skills for future schooling and employment (Generation Change, 2014, p. 16). These efforts aim toward promoting social action that is not a one-time experience, but a progressive commitment that helps to foster a habit of social action for life. This is also fundamental to the #iwill campaign's definition of 'meaningful' social action, in

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[6] The importance of this journey is reflected in funding that was given to support the #iwill campaign. The Cabinet Office's Youth Social Action Journey Fund (2013) sought to 'make the transition between social action opportunities easier for young people by funding organisations that provide more social action places to young people, and embedding National Citizen Service (NCS) in the social action journey of young people with whom they work' (Cabinet Office and Nick Hurd MP, 2014).

that a young person must have taken part at least every few months or in an activity lasting more than a day.

2. Youth-led

The second principle – 'youth-led' – refers to social action being 'led, owned and shaped by young people's needs, ideas and decision-making' (Generation Change, 2014, p. 15). That social action is 'youth-led' is important since it encourages participants to exercise their own agency and take ownership in the process of choosing, participating in, and leading social action. These justifications seem to underwrite the emphasis on 'youth-led' social action among partner organizations. In a content analysis of 23 youth social action providers' external communications, 'leadership' was found to be the second most common virtue they claimed to develop and the most important capacity that young people actually developed through social action (Arthur, Harrison and Taylor, 2015, pp. 11-12).[7]

Social action providers have implemented the youth-led principle in various ways. Some, for example, emphasize the planning stages in which young people's needs and opinions inform which causes to support and which strategies to implement. Others focus more on the execution stage, letting 'young people make their own decisions' and lead the project in practical ways, or train the staff, faculty, and other advanced participants to guide the younger participants through planning and executing projects (Generation Change, 2014, p. 15).

3. Reflective

The 'reflective' principle refers to the young person reflecting on what they learn as a result of their social action, considering ways to improve in the future, and being recognised for their contributions (Generation Change, 2014, p. 15). Compared to 30 other concepts studied in the content analysis of youth social action providers' external communications discussed above, reflection was the seventh most common practice referenced, but strikingly, it was not prioritised as a practice or virtue that young people develop by any CEO of those providers when interviewed (Arthur, Harrison and Taylor, 2015, pp. 11-12).

One interviewee suggested that recognising a young person's social action achievements would encourage them to continue their involvement and develop a habit of social action. For this reason, recognition has become a core part of many youth social action programmes. The Russell Commission even recommended a framework of accreditation and rewards that included a 'personal development and progression plan', a Youth Achievement Award, and 'a direct link between full-time volunteering and vocational qualifications' (Russell, 2005, pp. 87-90).

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[7] That youth social action should be youth-led has also been central to two major initiatives of the last decade. The National Citizen Service (NCS) measures its impact on participants' confidence in leading a team (Booth *et al.*, 2015), and the Russell Commission recommended providing young people with opportunities for 'designing and organising their own projects, recruiting their peers and sharing information and advice about their volunteering experiences' (Russell, 2005, p. 28) and established v (now vInspired) as a result.

As such, the practical manifestations of #iwill's 'reflective' principle break down into two broad spheres: reflection and recognition. In terms of *reflection*, social action providers help participants think about, catalogue, and learn from their experiences in varied ways. 'Envision', for example, uses a 'Skills Passport' whereby adult volunteers help students articulate and understand the 'qualities they've developed during the programme' (Generation Change, 2014, p. 23). Other social action providers—such as 'London Youth'—also incorporate a reflective element for staff members. In order to assess the impact of the program, London Youth uses an impact questionnaire to assess how participants develop traits of confidence, resilience, and leadership (Generation Change, 2014, p. 23).

In terms of *recognition*, many social action providers incorporate awards into their programs. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, vInspired, and Diana Award all reward exemplary youth social action. The #iwill campaign, too, recognizes the social action work of 50 outstanding young people each year through the #iwill Ambassador scheme (#iwill, 2016). Other social action providers such as NCS recognize young people through ceremonies such as graduation, while youth groups such as Scouts and Girlguides use 'waymarkers' such as uniforms and badges (Generation Change, 2014, p. 15).[8]

4. Challenging

The fourth quality principle is that social action should be 'challenging', which #iwill conceptualizes as 'stretching and engaging, as well as exciting and enjoyable' (The Campaign for Youth Social Action, 2013a, p. 6). #iwill argues that challenging social action stretches participants in meaningful ways while also helping them recognize and address the difficult social and political challenges that affect particular communities. While #iwill realizes that challenging social action should also be 'exciting and enjoyable,' the theoretical justification for grouping 'enjoyment' into the 'challenging' principle is not clear in their explanatory materials.

In practice, the 'challenging' principle has been implemented in numerous ways by social action providers—perhaps in a more disparate manner than any of the other quality principles. Some providers emphasize the amount and intensity of social action, tailoring the level and difficulty of work to the aptitudes of the participants in order to stretch their skills and experiences (Generation Change, 2014, p. 16). City Year UK, for example, offers an intense and time-consuming year of service where 'challenge is crucial to the year's appeal' (Generation Change, 2014, p. 19). Other providers focus less on the intensity of the work itself than on the *types* of problems addressed. By 'meeting people from different backgrounds' or participating in experiences that participants would 'not typically have elsewhere at school or home', participants are challenged to think critically about previously held assumptions and expectations, try new things (NCS incorporates physical challenges in the outdoors), and confront difficult problems (Year Here puts their full-time

[8] #iwill incorporates recognition into the 'reflective' principle, but also notes that it is also part of the 'progressive' and 'embedded' principles as well. We suggest that recognition aligns most clearly with the 'progressive' principle since it offers incentives to make social action a habit that is developed and strengthened over time.

postgraduates ‘directly into contact with some of the UK’s most challenging social problems’) (Generation Change, 2014, pp. 16, 19). Others engage participants by incorporating competitive elements into their programs to ensure that social action is ‘challenging’ (Generation Change, 2014, p. 16).

5. Embedded

The ‘embedded’ principle entails that social action should be ‘accessible to all and well integrated into existing pathways to become a habit for life’ (Generation Change, 2014, p. 14). This reflects the importance of integrating social action into the familiar communities and aspects of a young person’s life—including families, local communities, and religious communities; schools, colleges, and universities; and apprenticeships, internships, and jobs. Presumably, embedding social action in existing communities—and integrating it into aspects of everyday life—minimizes barriers for young people to participate and encourages them to engage within their existing communities and contexts, thereby helping to foster genuine community engagement and a sustainable habit of social action.

Although the *progressive* principle has theoretical links to developing the habit of social action, in practice the *embedded* principle appears to be most connected to the process of habituation in how providers apply the principle. Some providers focus explicitly on developing a habit of social action that will ‘last into adulthood’ by valuing habituation in the organization’s operational strategy and mission statement (Generation Change, 2014, p. 14). Since research with adults in the UK suggests that participation changes at such ‘critical moments and turning points’ (Brodie *et al.*, 2011, p. 8), one provider seeks to involve young people in social action at critical transition moments, such as changing schools, leaving school, or starting a job (Generation Change, 2014, p. 14). Other providers graft a social action program onto existing youth groups and services (youth clubs, student unions, social networks) to make ‘the activity more accessible and visible’ (Generation Change, 2014, p. 14). In a similar vein, some providers have attempted to normalise social action amongst young people through ‘positive peer pressure’ and role models. Witnessing peers and mentors serving in the community ‘helps normalise the activity and make it aspirational’ (Generation Change, 2014, p. 13). In these ways, efforts to embed social action in existing pathways and communities contributes to the process of habituation.

6. Socially Impactful

Finally, quality social action must be ‘socially impactful’. At the core of #iwill’s socially impactful principle is the ‘double benefit’ model of social action. Originally devised by The Campaign for Youth Social Action for the #iwill campaign (The Campaign for Youth Social Action, 2013a), the double benefit model seeks to ensure that social action benefits the young person as well as the individual, community, or cause being helped. As noted by several CEOs of youth social action providers (Arthur, Harrison and Taylor, 2015, p. 15), this double benefit is considered important in distinguishing youth social action from youth work more widely since youth social action is generally unpaid (Cabinet Office and Ipsos MORI, 2016) and is directed toward social benefit, not simply individual earnings. The existing model positions these individual outcomes as separate from the community outcomes of social action, with ‘Emotional Intelligence’—defined as social awareness and empathy—linking the two (The Campaign for Youth Social Action, 2013a, p. 12).

Providers have taken varied approaches to ensuring that social action is socially impactful. Some use evidence-based assessments of challenges in the local area to determine which social issues they confront, while others prioritize strong community partnerships and beneficiary-directed interventions that rely upon 'input from the people they hope to benefit' or other community groups 'that have a specialism in the area to be tackled' (Generation Change, 2014, p. 17). Others focus less on issue selection and instead emphasize measuring the outcomes of their projects through 'before and after comparisons' so they can base future projects upon critical assessments of whether the planned efforts have achieved, and might continue to achieve, the desired outcomes (Generation Change, 2014, p. 17). These various methods of assessment aim to ensure that youth social action is socially impactful.

Part II: Toward Conceptual Clarity

The quality framework for youth social action—including the six principles, double benefit model, and individual/community outcomes—has guided the #iwill campaign from its inception. #iwill's commitment to promote a habit of social action that aligns with the six quality principles constitutes a significant achievement and a valuable model for other campaigns to follow. Yet—as anticipated at the start of the campaign[9]—challenges have arisen as the framework has been applied, tested, and evaluated that leave the theoretical and practical relationship between the elements of the quality framework somewhat unclear. We wish to highlight four aspects that would benefit from additional conceptual clarity.

First, youth social action providers tend to operate with a limited view of a habit. In the context of youth social action, 'habit' is often used to mean frequency of behaviour and intention to participate in the future.[10] While intentions are important for habit formation, intentions alone do not constitute stable and enduring dispositions, and evidence suggests that they prove unsuitable as a single measure of habit when actual behaviour is tested (Marta *et al.*, 2014; Snyder and Omoto, 2007). By emphasizing the behavioural outcome (future participation in social action), this conception of a habit downplays the emotional, motivational, and dispositional aspects of habit that are emphasized in other parts of #iwill's mission, such as the double benefit model and outcomes framework. While psychologists (Ajzen, 1991; Verplanken and Orbell, 2003) and philosophers (Miller, 1974; Ravaisson, 1838; Steutel and Spiecker, 2004) have sought to define and measure a habit in a range of areas, it is only recently that this work has been applied to youth social action (Arthur *et al.*, 2017). It is too soon to tell whether or how this recent research on a habit of social action will inform practitioners' work, though it was conducted in partnership with the #iwill campaign and involved major providers including NCS, vInspired, Envision, and Diana Award.

[9] The Campaign for Youth Social Action (2013a, p. 13) invited further research on the initial work conducted in establishing the #iwill campaign, since '[w]e recognise that the campaign, and the definitions and principles that underpin it, will evolve and develop over time'.

[10] Practitioner-focused studies and evaluations typically ask young people about their intentions to continue participating in social action (Booth *et al.*, 2014; Breeze and Thornton, 2006; Ipsos MORI, 2015; Kirkman, Sanders and Emanuel, 2015; National Youth Agency, 2013).

Second, many youth social action providers are unclear as to how the two spheres of the double benefit model relate. While the quality framework clearly outlines the intended individual benefits of youth social action (optimism, determination, and emotional intelligence), understanding outcomes for the community – particularly through quantitative studies – has been more challenging, partly owing to the difficulty of using standardised instruments to measure the diversity of activity within the #iwill campaign's broad definition of social action (Tyler-Rubinstein *et al.*, 2016, p. 12). Although cost-benefit analyses and social return on investment calculations have found that NCS, for example, generates between £0.70 and £2.38 of benefits to society per £1 of investment (Cameron *et al.*, 2017, p. 5), and studies such as the Uniformed Youth Social Action evaluation have attempted to fill the gap in quantitative evidence on community outcomes (Tyler-Rubinstein *et al.*, 2016), work in this area remains limited. In many ways, this is understandable given the limitations outlined. Yet, the lack of conceptualization of community outcomes risks emphasizing individual outcomes at the expense of the community, and the model's separation of individual and community outcomes potentially neglects the fundamentally social sources and impact of individual development.

The original double benefit model positioned the individual outcomes as separate from the community outcomes of social action, with 'Emotional Intelligence'—defined as social awareness and empathy—linking the two (The Campaign for Youth Social Action, 2013a, p. 12). However, more recent studies by Generation Change (2014, p. 12) and Arthur, Harrison, and Taylor (2015, p. 23) attempt to reconfigure the double benefit model by positioning character as the link between individual and community outcomes and recognizing a more substantial overlap between the two types of outcomes. In particular, Arthur, Harrison, and Taylor recommend that 'the impact of character on both the individual and the community/society should be considered in any approaches to measuring the double benefit of youth social action, including providers' theories of change for their programmes' (Arthur, Harrison and Taylor, 2015, p. 22).

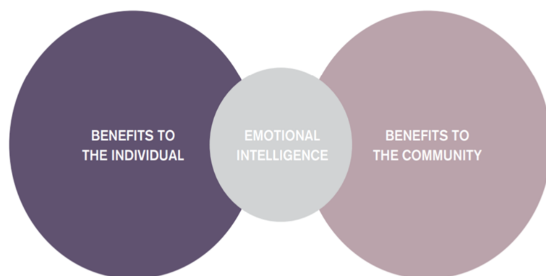

Figure 3: Original double benefit model (Arthur, Harrison, and Taylor, 2015: 16)

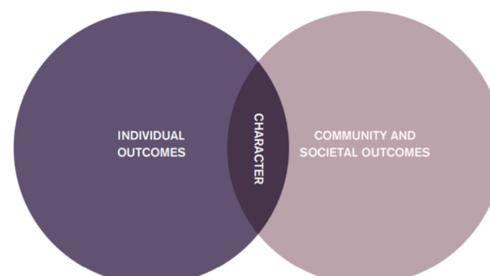

Figure 4: The Jubilee Centre's revised double benefit model (Arthur, Harrison, and Taylor, 2015: 23)

This revised model—with character linking the two benefits—coheres with social action providers' views about their work. Of the CEOs of youth social action providers interviewed by Arthur, Harrison and Taylor (2015, p. 4), 87% 'said that developing young people's character is fundamental to their organisation's work. Over half said it is their top priority'. Although 87% of CEOs view character development as fundamental to their organization, many interviewees had not 'necessarily thought about its meaning until prompted in the interview and gave personal

rather than organisational definitions' (Arthur, Harrison and Taylor, 2015, p. 10). Thus, if character is to link the double benefit model, as Arthur *et al.* suggest, #iwill's quality framework would benefit from more clarity about how character is conceptualized and developed.[11]

Third, some social action providers overemphasize particular virtues. Recall the three categories of individual outcomes: 1) optimism (communication and creativity), 2) determination (confidence and agency, planning and problem solving, and resilience and grit), and 3) emotional intelligence (leadership, relationships, managing feelings, and self-control) (The Campaign for Youth Social Action, 2013a, p. 12). Noticeably, many of these outcomes are also virtues—in particular, *performance* and *intellectual* virtues.[12] This overlap between the outcomes framework and character coheres with the revised double benefit model, but *moral* virtues—virtues that direct us toward morally good ends, guide our actions, thoughts, and emotions in morally appropriate ways, and 'enable us to respond well in any area of experience'—are conspicuous by their absence (Arthur, Harrison and Taylor, 2015, p. 21).[13] If 'developing young people's character is fundamental to their organisation's work', then social action providers need to be more intentional about which character virtues they seek to develop.

Fourth, there are discrepancies in how #iwill's framework has been understood and applied. For example, there is a significant gap between the virtues that social action participants think they are developing and those that providers think they are fostering. Arthur, Harrison and Taylor (2015, p. 13) found that the 'top three virtues prioritised by providers and young people in the interviews and focus groups are, respectively, leadership, citizenship, and service, and confidence, respect, and communication'. This difference highlights the need for more clarity in how the quality framework is conceptualized and applied.

Moreover, the six quality principles have been implemented in disparate ways, in part because of the divergent ways in which the principles are conceptualized by providers and participants (Generation Change, 2014). Such diversity is expected and even encouraged for campaigns as large and multifaceted as #iwill. But if #iwill seeks to encourage both consistency and coherence in the use of its quality framework, additional conceptual clarity could be useful. A reinterpretation

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[11] In 2014, the Jubilee Centre and the #iwill campaign jointly released a 'Statement on Youth Social Action and Character Development' that underscores that 'youth social action is an effective and meaningful way to develop young people's character virtues', outlines various characteristics of a virtue, and identifies some practical ways character development happens (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2014). Our Aristotelian account in Part III aligns with, and extends, their view.

[12] The Jubilee Centre compartmentalizes virtues of character into four categories: civic, intellectual, moral, and performance virtues, which are unified by practical wisdom. For more on how Jubilee conceives of and employs this portrait of character, see 'A Framework for Character Education' (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2017).

[13] There are various reasons why this might be the case. In their study of youth social action providers, Arthur, Harrison, and Taylor found that even though providers recognize the importance of developing moral virtues, they are unclear on how to assess and measure such virtues (Arthur, Harrison and Taylor, 2015, p. 19). Another possibility is that providers are overly focused on the employability of the young person and perceive performance and intellectual virtues as disproportionately important for getting a job and performing well. Indeed, many providers 'talked about employability unprompted, and about improving young people's employability as a key objective of their organisation' (Arthur, Harrison and Taylor, 2015, p. 10).

of 'habit' through an Aristotelian account of virtue, we believe, can help to unify the potentially disparate elements of #iwill's quality framework.

Part III: An Aristotelian Framework for a Habit of Social Action

Following the helpful suggestion that 'character' is a better link between individual and community outcomes than 'emotional intelligence' (Arthur, Harrison and Taylor, 2015), we seek to help specify what 'character' might consist in, particularly as it relates to a habit of social action. We believe an Aristotelian conception of virtue[14] and its key features can supply a useful point of comparison for the #iwill campaign's six quality principles and its emphasis on social action as a 'habit for life' (Step Up To Serve, 2014).

Virtue as Habit (Habit for Life)

On a basic Aristotelian account, a virtue is a settled and stable disposition to think, feel, deliberate, and act reliably toward good ends in the right ways at the right times across different contexts and circumstances.[15] Unlike a mere thought, feeling, or act, a virtue is a stable, deep, and enduring trait. It develops over time and forms part of a person's moral identity and character.[16]

Aristotelians typically understand a virtue of character as a kind of *habit*—a settled trait or disposition developed over time through habituation.[17] Such an approach implies that the very concept of a virtue is framed by its process of cultivation. Thus, as Daniel Russell notes, 'the nature of the virtues is not a separate issue from how we cultivate the virtues' (Russell, 2015, p. 18). An Aristotelian account of virtue is fundamentally developmental.[18]

Recall that #iwill tends to frame a 'habit' in terms of frequency of participation and intention for future participation. This *behavioural* conception of a habit downplays the *emotional, motivational*, and *dispositional* aspects of habit emphasized in other parts of #iwill's mission. However, the Aristotelian conception of a virtue as an integrated part of one's moral character that disposes one not only to *act* but also to *feel*, *think*, and *deliberate* in appropriate ways highlights the emotional, motivational, and dispositional aspects of a habit (Annas, 2011, pp. 66-82; Broadie, 1991, pp. 75-76, 81-82; Trinkaus Zagzebski, 1996, pp. 126-134). As we will see below, this

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[14] We are engaging a broadly *Aristotelian* account of virtue, not necessarily *Aristotle's*, though we occasionally draw on insights from Aristotle to explicate the view. When we do pull directly from Aristotle, we use Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle, 1999) (henceforth abbreviated *"NE")*.

[15] This account of virtue is largely shaped by Julia Annas (2011) and Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski (1996, pp. 84-137). Other helpful Aristotelian accounts of character and virtue include Russell (2015) and Burnyeat (1980).

[16] *NE* 1105b20-1106a14. See Russell (2015, pp. 20-23) for a helpful overview.

[17] Aristotle differentiates virtues of thought from virtues of character partly by how they are acquired: 'virtue of thought arises and grows mostly from teaching', while virtue of character 'results from habit' (*NE* 1103a15-18*).*

[18] See Annas (2011, pp. 4-5, 16-32, 38) for a 'fundamentally developmental' conception of virtue. See also Broadie (1991, pp. 69-74, esp. 69-70), and Russell (2015, pp. 17-20).

conception provides a more holistic conception of how the habit of social action might be understood and cultivated.[19]

Aristotelian Character Education and the Six Quality Principles

1. Developmental and Aspirational (Progressive)

If a moral virtue is a kind of habit, it must be developed over time through practice: by repeating certain feelings, thoughts, or acts iteratively until they become seemingly automatic or instinctual.[20] When we possess this habit with sufficient strength and stability, we become reliably disposed to feel, think, or act appropriately when relevant situations arise.[21] Aristotle offers an example: 'abstaining from pleasures makes us become more temperate, and once we have become temperate we are most capable of abstaining from pleasures.'[22] Similarly, 'habituation in disdain for frightening situations and in standing firm against them makes us become brave, and once we have become brave we shall be most capable of standing firm.'[23] We develop virtuous character, in short, by repeating virtuous actions, thoughts, and feelings until they become deep and settled habits.

This Aristotelian conception of habituation tracks the #iwill campaign's 'progressive' principle'. To reflect a virtuous habit, social action must be done as a continued practice and not merely as a one-off experience. #iwill supports progressive youth social action by encouraging participants to be supported through moments which would otherwise impede the cultivation of the habit. #iwill, for example, recommends that young people are directed to social action opportunities they might not find on their own, encourages them to take the next step after finishing a project, and supports them through critical transition points—changing schools, leaving schools, starting jobs. Together, these initiatives provide participants with the consistent and sustained experiences necessary for habituation. Over time, they have the opportunity to become increasingly disposed to pursue social action with the same kind of instinctual response that characterizes a habit.

Although #iwill focuses on *youth* social action, they also recognize the importance of developing the habit into adulthood and ultimately 'for life'. An Aristotelian account aligns with this view. Given the difficulties, limitations, and contingencies of human existence, Aristotle believes that a complete and perfect virtue can never be fully possessed or perfected in this life.[24] As Annas writes, '[v]irtue is not a once for all achievement but a disposition of our character that is constantly developing as it meets new challenges and enlarges the understanding it involves' (Annas, 2011,

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[19] See also Arthur *et al.* (2017, pp. 9-13).
[20] For Aristotle's extended discussion of habituation, see *NE* 1103a15-1104b4.
[21] Aristotle thought that the ultimate goal of practicing and studying virtue is to become good and not merely to know what is good (*NE* 1103b26-30).
[22] *NE* 1104a34-1104b1.
[23] *NE* 1104b2-4.
[24] *NE* 1099b25-1101a22. See also *NE*, 1180a1-4: "it is not enough if they the correct upbringing and attention when they are young; rather, they must continue the same practices and be habituated to them when they become men."

p. 38). For this reason, an Aristotelian account of virtue is both *developmental* and *aspirational;* it is a habit developed over a lifetime of practice, oriented toward an aspirational ideal.[25]

Since the habit of social action will never be fully perfected, an Aristotelian account affirms the need not only to cultivate this habit into adulthood but also 'for life'. This aspirational account of virtue has practical import for the #iwill campaign. If a habit of social action is not simply an *intention* to act but a *disposition* developed over a lifetime, providers might spend more time not only encouraging participation in social action (a behavioural outcome), but also helping youth develop the proper emotional, motivational, and cognitive responses to perform that social action consistently and well over a lifetime. Their aim might shift from simply increasing participation to also encouraging youth to reflect on their motivations, understand their emotional responses to various situations, and develop the practical wisdom and moral resolve to act well in the face of difficulty. A conceptualization of a habit as a more holistic disposition along Aristotelian lines might actually help to promote the 'emotional intelligence' and quality principles – including 'reflective' and 'challenging' social action – that #iwill prioritizes.

2. Learning by Doing (Youth-Led)

An Aristotelian account also supports #iwill's emphasis on 'youth-led' social action. In particular, an Aristotelian approach affirms why ages 10-20 is a good time to cultivate a habit of social action and offers a developmental justification for letting youth lead.

First, since moral character is largely a result of habituation, Aristotle holds that the development of virtue should begin early in life.[26] Otherwise, young people might acquire *bad* habits that would make it difficult to cultivate virtuous habits later.[27] While our character is always in the process of development (Roberts, Walton and Viechtbauer, 2006, p. 21), early childhood and adolescence are particularly important times for developing habits that will shape decisions, choices, and character later in life (see Boerger and Hoffman, 2015). This early engagement is relevant for the habit of social action. Indeed, Arthur *et al.* (2017, p. 5) show that 'those who first get involved in service under the age of 10 were found to be more than two times more likely to have formed a habit of service than if they started aged 16-18 years'.

Cultivating this habit during this developmental stage is especially important given trends among 'emerging adults,' those between ages 18-29 (see Notfle, 2015). Because emerging adults now experience less stability in their jobs, residences, and relationships than previous generations, they are less embedded in their communities and more focused on their own 'identity exploration.'[28] As a result, emerging adults tend to be more 'self-focused' than those in other developmental stages (Arnett, 2014). If this research is accurate, then cultivating a habit of social action – especially one that is 'progressive,' 'embedded' and 'socially impactful' – might be especially relevant for children and adolescents. If they are able to make social action a habit

[25] For more on the aspirational component of virtue, see Annas (2011, pp. 16-32, esp. 25).
[26] *NE* 1095b5-7.
[27] *NE* 1179b5-1180a9.
[28] For a summary of this research, see Arnett (2014) and Arnett (2000).

during this developmental stage, they may be able to resist some of the instability, isolation, and self-focus that often characterizes emerging adulthood.

In addition to affirming #iwill's focus on youth, an Aristotelian account of virtue offers a second justification for 'youth-led' social action: youth-led action ensures that participants have the type of experiences necessary for habit formation. On an Aristotelian account, a virtue of character, like a quality habit of social action, cannot be developed merely by reading a book or attending a lecture.[29] To become a stable and enduring part of one's character, a virtue must be habituated through repeated action—much as one would learn a skill.[30] Aristotle emphasizes this skill analogy in his discussion of habituation: 'we become builders, for instance, by building, and we become harpists by playing the harp. Similarly, then, we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions.'[31] On this account, young people develop a habit of social action by exercising their agency and taking ownership of their involvement.

This aspect of an Aristotelian account helps to illuminate a *developmental* motivation behind the 'youth-led' principle. Young people cannot develop a high-quality habit by simply watching a video or participating in a one-off project. They must learn by doing. For when young people exercise their agency in choosing, planning, and leading social action projects, they engage and develop their full selves.

Of course, 'youth-led' social action creates challenges and burdens for providers and the communities they serve. For example, youth may lack the skill or knowledge of professionals, which might create frustrations and challenges for providers. Moreover, 'youth-led' social action can create additional educational and emotional labour for providers who must spend additional time helping youth participants reflect on their experience and develop their skills, capacities, and character through their social action. But if youth-led social action is central to #iwill's campaign, then an Aristotelian emphasis on the developmental justification of youth-led social action might help providers recognize the educational benefit of allowing youth to exercise agency in their social action, especially if, as studies suggest, providers consider 'leadership' the most important capacity developed by participants (Arthur, Harrison, and Taylor, 2015, 11-12). An Aristotelian approach might also affirm the importance of providing coaches or mentors, or training staff to guide youth through the process of planning and executing projects (Generation Change, 2014: 15). Such support encourages that youth-led action generates developmental benefits, which connects directly to #iwill's 'reflective' principle.

[29] See *NE* 1103b27-30, 1179a34-1179b32; Prior (2007, 50-51); Wilburn (2007, 71-73); and Kiss and Euben (2010, 12-13).

[30] For an extended explication of the 'skill analogy,' see Annas (2011, esp. 7-51) and Russell (2015). For an insightful distinction between skills and virtues, see Trinkaus Zagzebski (1996, 106-116) and *NE*, 1105a26-b5.

[31] *NE* 1103a4-1103b2.

3. Intelligent Virtue (Reflective)

An Aristotelian account of virtue affirms #iwill's commitment to 'reflective' social action. While the cultivation of virtue requires habituation, simple repetition of action might foster a mindless habit (such as a routine), not necessarily foster a virtue, or what Julia Annas (2011) calls an *intelligent* habit.[32] As Annas emphasizes, to *learn* and *grow* from our actions, we must reflect on our experiences, understand *how* and *why* we acted in particular situations, and deliberate about how we might act differently in the future (2011, pp. 16-40).[33] An Aristotelian account thus makes reflection on personal experience central to character formation.

In terms of social action, youth maximize their experiences when they reflect on their actions and consider how their experiences affect themselves and their communities. This dialectic of action and reflection ensures that youth develop an intelligent habit of social action and not simply a mindless routine.

Moreover, this dialectic helps youth develop the habit of practical intelligence itself.[34] Practical intelligence, or *practical wisdom* in Aristotelians terms, is the intellectual capacity to recognize the salient features of any situation, deliberate how best to act, and then make practical judgments toward action in particular circumstances.[35] Implicit in #iwill's 'reflective' principle, then, is a commitment to cultivating the virtue of practical wisdom, for #iwill does not value the *mere act* of reflection for its own sake, but for its contribution to developing a *cultivated capacity*, a *virtue* that performs this reflection and ensures that social action is performed consistently and well. As such, an Aristotelian approach highlights why practical wisdom might be added to the list of #iwill's 'individual outcomes', since it is not currently captured by their original focus on 'optimism,' 'determination,' and 'emotional intelligence.'

An Aristotelian approach, moreover, might inform #iwill's efforts to understand how this virtue of practical wisdom is cultivated. As in the case of moral virtues, practical wisdom is not learned simply by reading a book or listening to a lecture. It, too, must be learned by doing – by reflecting on one's experiences and seeking wisdom about how to think, feel, and act in similar circumstances. In order to equip youth to acquire such wisdom, Aristotle places special emphasis on the role of a 'wise person' who can 'see correctly because experience has given them their

[32] For Aristotle, virtue requires that we not only do the right action but also do that action for the right reasons (*NE* 1105a17-b9). See also Annas (2011, pp. 13-15) and Broadie (1991, pp. 108-109).

[33] For more on the importance of reflecting upon that which we know and have experienced, see *NE* 1095b4; Broadie (1991, pp. 72-74); Russell (2015, pp. 19-20); and Burnyeat (1980, pp. 70-73). And for more on the importance of experiences in the development of virtue, see *NE,* 1095a2-4, 1141b10-23, 1142a12-15, and 1143a20-b14; Prior, 'Moral Philosophy and Moral Cultivation,' 61-65; Burnyeat (1980), and Annas (2011, pp. 12, 16-32).

[34] For more on the relationship between reflection and practical wisdom, see the Jubilee Centre's 'Statement on Youth Social Action and Character Development' (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2014), which emphasizes the importance of 'virtue literacy' in quality reflection and the development of practical wisdom.

[35] *NE,* 1140a25-1145a14. Russell (2015, pp. 27-29) offers a helpful comparison between practical wisdom and skills. For a connection to social action, see Arthur *et al.* (2017, p. 10).

eye.'[36] Aristotle suggests that young people can cultivate practical wisdom, in part, by emulating wise people and learning from their experience.[37] Contemporary scholars have affirmed the developmental importance of emulating role models who exemplify virtue and wisdom (Annas, 2011, pp. 16-24; Narvaez and Lapsley, 2005, pp. 150-159; Russell, 2015, pp. 32-36; Vianello, Galliani and Haidt, 2010; Zagzebski, 2013, 2015).

An Aristotelian approach thus highlights the need for providers to be intentional about offering structured opportunities for youth to reflect on their experiences[38] and interact with virtuous role models who embody virtue and wisdom.[39] Such opportunities are particularly important given recent interviews that showed reflection is not prioritised by many providers (Arthur, Harrison and Taylor, 2015, pp. 11-12). An Aristotelian approach, therefore, affirms the work of providers, such as Envision and London Youth, who intentionally create opportunities for reflection on the qualities and capacities that youth have learned through social action, and organizations who train their staff to guide youth through their participation or provide mentors and coaches to 'support young people to take the next step' (Generation Change, 2014, pp. 15-16). But an Aristotelian approach also goes one step farther. If youth are always emulating role models, even unconsciously, then providers must recognize how members of their staff are always acting as role models for youth participants, whether they realize it or not. Recognising the importance of reflection and emulation in character formation can help providers be more intentional about how they train and supervise staff and how they might provide youth with access to mentors and exemplars who model quality social action. As Arthur *et al.* (2017, p. 33) suggest, such an approach might also encourage providers to extend social action opportunities to adults, whose example and participation might have a 'positive, knock-on effect on young people's participation, too'.

4. Putting on Virtue (Challenging and Enjoyable)

Cultivating a stable, enduring, and intelligent habit of social action will not be easy. After all, a virtue is a kind of *excellence*, a developed capacity that allows us to act at the limit of our powers and respond appropriately to difficulties.[40] Without such difficulties, a virtue would not be worthy

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[36] See *NE*, 1095a2-4, 1141b10-23, 1142a12-15, 1143a20-b14. See also Prior, 'Moral Philosophy and Moral Cultivation,' 61-65; Annas (2011, pp. 12, 17-32); Broadie (1991, pp. 73-74); and Burnyeat (1980).

[37] Aristotle often highlights the role of the *phronimos*—or the 'wise person'—when discussing virtuous action and affection in *NE* 1140a25-1141b23, 1105b7-9, and 1107a1-3.

[38] Arthur, Harrison and Taylor (2015, p. 24) make a similar recommendation: 'young people should be supported to reflect holistically on all the ways in which they develop character, including through social action. Through doing so, young people, providers and adult volunteers should be encouraged to become more 'virtue literate'… and young people should be encouraged to consider how they have or plan to apply these virtues to all that they do'. This is similar to Annas (2011, p. 19), who argues that the 'explanation enables the learner to go ahead in different situations and contexts, rather than simply repeat the exact same thing that was done. The ability both to teach and to learn a skill thus depends on the ability to convey an explanation by giving and receiving reasons'.

[39] Recent research on a habit of social action identified that young people who had made a habit of social action – had participated in the previous 12 months and said they were very likely to or definitely would participate again in the next 12 months – were also more likely to identify with exemplars of moral and civic virtues than those without a habit (Arthur *et al.*, 2017).

[40] See *NE* 1105a8-17. See also Aquinas (1947, pp. I-II, 55, II-II, 129.122).

of admiration and praise. The fact that a virtue responds to ‘challenges’ is built into the very structure of Aristotle’s aspirational conception of virtue as an excellence.

This aspect of a virtue corresponds to an important aspect of #iwill’s ‘challenging’ principle. By encouraging youth to confront challenging social problems, recognize their own biases and assumptions, and think critically about the best ways to respond, providers offer opportunities that push youth to the current limits of their powers and help them stretch their capacities. Both the *intensity* and *type* of challenge can thus increase youth capacity and character—but only as long as providers are intentional about helping them through this process. If providers simply confront youth with difficult problems without providing the emotional, social, and educational support to *learn* from these challenges, then these social problems may overwhelm participants. This is why an explicitly Aristotelian focus on development – supplemented by reflection and support from mentors, coaches, and wise exemplars – is a helpful framework for the ‘challenging’ principle. Without this developmental framework, the ‘challenging’ principle may end up undermining rather than supporting social action as a habit for life.

The developmental aspect of an Aristotelian approach also highlights a second aspect of the ‘challenging’ principle that is downplayed by some social action providers. Not only does virtue respond to challenging *situations*, but the *process* of cultivating virtue itself is challenging. Because their experience is limited and their characters are still in flux, most young people have not yet developed the practical wisdom or stable dispositions of character that enable virtuous responses across a range of situations. Even if young people know the right thing to do, they may not be motivated to do it. And even when they do the right thing, they might be motivated by purely self-serving ends that belie a settled and stable disposition of character oriented toward the good. Aristotle identifies these two states, respectively, as ‘incontinence’ and ‘continence’ and argues that moral formation should aim to move the incontinent and continent to a state of ‘virtue,’ where one is able to act reliably from this settled habit of character.[41] If #iwill seeks to foster a habit of social action, then it must devote attention to how to motivate youth not only to pursue social action when they are not otherwise motivated to do it, but to do it reliably and for the right reasons when they are.

One way that #iwill seeks to encourage this progression is through ‘recognition’. At first glance, #iwill’s focus on recognition might seem to undermine an Aristotelian commitment to virtue and character. Shouldn’t youth be motivated by the benefits to their community and the development of their own character, not solely by accolades?[42] An Aristotelian account, however, can help to bring the developmental importance of recognition into view. As Aristotelians have long recognized, one way to encourage young people to become virtuous is by *praising* them for acting virtuously. Praise offers positive reinforcement that helps young people overcome internal

[41] For Aristotle’s extended discussion of both continence and incontinence (as they relate to virtue and vice), see *NE*, Books 2 and 7. For an account of this process, see Burnyeat (1980, esp. 86-88), and for a discussion of the relationship between continence/incontinence and moral improvement, see Wilburn (2007, 74-6). Christian Miller has also explored the idea of blended states of character (2014a esp. Chapter 2; 2014b).

[42] For a helpful distinction between merely doing virtuous actions and acting virtuously for its own sake, see: Broadie (1991, pp. 85-90); Burnyeat (1980, pp. 77-78).

resistance to doing the right thing and thereby motivates them to act virtuously in the future.[43] The hope is that the more young people perform this virtuous act, the easier it will be for them to do it again, and the more likely they will to do it over time and across different circumstances.[44] Eventually, they might overcome all internal resistance to acting virtuously and even come to see the reason for acting virtuously for its own sake—regardless of recognition. They might even find a certain kind of *pleasure* and *ease* in acting virtuously, knowing they are doing the right thing even when it might otherwise be difficult.[45]

This Aristotelian approach of 'putting on virtue'—initially acting virtuously for the wrong reasons but eventually coming to act virtuously for its own sake (Herdt 2008)—offers two useful conceptual resources for #iwill.[46] First, it helps to supply the missing link between 'challenging' and 'enjoyable' aspects of social action. In presenting the 'challenging' principle, #iwill is careful to emphasize that social action must be 'stretching and engaging, as well as exciting and enjoyable' (The Campaign for Youth Social Action, 2013a: 6), but they do not adequately explain why they include 'enjoyable' social action within the 'challenging' principle. An Aristotelian approach provides one way to conceptualize the relation. While social action might be 'challenging,' it must also be 'enjoyable' enough to motivate youth to continue doing it, especially when it is difficult or overwhelming.[47] That youth find it enjoyable might not be the best reason to perform social action – it could seem overly focused on individual pleasure or satisfaction rather than social impact – but it could help them 'put on virtue' when they do not yet see the joy in acting virtuously for the sake of their community and their own character development. An Aristotelian conception of a virtue as developmental thus provides a conceptual way to incorporate an 'enjoyable' aspect of social action into the 'challenging' principle, highlighting how 'enjoyment' can be both a means of virtue cultivation and a quality that attends mature virtuous action.[48]

Second, an Aristotelian approach provides a way to reconcile #iwill's focus on 'recognition' with a development framework focused on character. On an Aristotelian approach, offering recognition to those who excel in social action or who demonstrate impressive commitment and character serves several important educational functions. For example, it provides youth with access to role models to emulate, and it motivates them to perform similar actions, even if initially for the sake

[43] *NE* 1101b33-34, 1172a20-26.
[44] Recent evidence confirms that recognition and the habit of service (participating in service in the past 12 months and intending to participate in the next 12 months) are positively correlated. Arthur *et al.* (2017, p. 33) write, 'Recognition and reward were positively linked to a habit of service in the questionnaire in this study, and were highlighted by the young people interviewed as things that were welcomed yet unexpected–certainly not something they felt they needed in order to help others'.
[45] *NE* 1120a24-27.
[46] For an insightful analysis of how this approach has informed a long line of moral educators, see Herdt (2008). See also Annas (2011, pp. 40, 66-67) and Russell (2015, pp. 26-27, 32-33) for a comparison between beginners and experts performing virtuous acts in the virtuous way.
[47] In their study of youth who had developed a habit of service, Arthur *et al.* (2017, p. 28) found that 'respondents who enjoyed their service "a great deal" were 47% more likely to be in the Habit group than those who enjoyed it "a fair amount"'.
[48] *NE* 1104b5-16. For Aristotle's extended discussion of the importance of pleasure, see *NE*, Books 2 and 7. See also Burnyeat (1980, pp. 76-77) and Annas (2011, pp. 66-82).

of recognition.[49] Eventually, as participants come to see the value of benefitting their community and developing their character, they may be less motivated by awards and recognition. They may even come to find pleasure in performing social action and thereby act virtuously with a sense of pleasure and ease. In such cases, they would have acquired a virtuous habit.[50]

Of course, one danger of this approach is that it might reinforce an achievement culture that prizes recognition for its own sake. An Aristotelian approach can help providers avoid this danger by understanding the developmental role of recognition, not as an end in itself but as a means to cultivating and honouring virtue.[51] To ensure that recognition is an occasion for education rather than simply an opportunity to win esteem, providers might be more explicit about the purpose of the awards, more intentional about whom they choose to recognize, and more explicit about why they chose them. Framing an award less as a 'prize' than as a 'reward for virtue' might promote more beneficial effects for character development and facilitate the process of 'putting on virtue'.

5. Community as the Context of Character (Embedded)

Implicit in the above discussion is a central aspect of Aristotelian character education: the development of individual character does not occur in isolation but in community, within cultures, relationships, and social practices that shape us in fundamental ways. From conception and birth onward, human beings are, to use Aristotle's terms, social and political animals embedded within communities ranging from families and households to cities and states, all of which condition our aims, identity, and character.[52] We simply cannot escape this social influence or the obligations and opportunities that sociality creates. Participating in community (of one sort or another) is part of what it means to be human.[53]

For this reason, an Aristotelian anthropology affirms #iwill's emphasis on social action that is 'embedded' within particular communities. #iwill emphasizes embeddedness as a way to make social action 'accessible to all and well integrated into existing pathways to become a habit for life' (Generation Change, 2014: 14). As discussed in Part II, implicit in #iwill's approach is the sense that embeddedness 1) encourages *motivation* by reducing barriers to social action, making opportunities more 'visible,' and incentivizing youth to connect to their own communities, 2) offers *support, examples,* and *instruction* from peers and mentors in the community whom youth know

[49] Recognition might also serve to make particular norms around quality social action salient, which might help participants internalize these norms in developing their character. For more on how making norms salient shapes character, see Miller (2014a, pp. 232-233).
[50] Arthur *et al.* (2017, p. 22) found that youth who participated frequently in social action and intended to participate in the near future 'seemed to be more familiar with the four virtues [than those who had not developed the habit of social action], identified more closely with them, and had friends whom they felt would support this assessment of self'.
[51] Aristotle, *NE* 1105a27-1105b9, thought that virtue must be chosen for its own sake. Burnyeat (1980, pp. 77-78) offers an insightful account of how habituation develops this capacity.
[52] *NE* 1097a9-12, 1169b17-23, 1170a12, 1179a34-1180b7.
[53] *NE 1097a9-12*; Annas (2011, pp. 21-22, 52-65) also highlights the role of embeddedness in character formation.

and admire, and 3) encourages *habituation* by utilizing 'existing pathways' that might make social action more accessible and sustainable.[54]

Although #iwill relates both the 'progressive' and 'embedded' principles to developing the habit of social action, an Aristotelian account provides conceptual resources for delineating the two principles. Broadly, the 'progressive' element pertains to the relationship between social action and the process of habit formation, regardless of where that process happens. Although still relating to habituation, the 'embedded' principle captures the role that a young person's particular context—their community, mentors, friendships, etc.—plays in developing the habit of social action. In this way, the 'progressive' principle pertains to the process of habituation while the 'embedded' principle highlights the communal context of that process.

Aristotle, for example, emphasizes the role of friendship as a significant context for character formation. Aristotle affirms the importance of friendships and common activities that provide pleasure and support, explores how friends supply useful instruction and examples that can inform how we live, and highlights how friendships of mutual care and concern provide occasions to habituate virtue and 'do good' to others.[55] These Aristotelian insights align with #iwill's justification for embedded social action. Indeed, Arthur *et al.* (2017, pp. 22-24) found a positive correlation between possessing a habit of social action and having a parent, guardian, or friend that also serves in the community, since these role models offer examples, support, and encouragement.

An Aristotelian approach also offers an additional justification for embeddedness: embedded social action also encourages *accountability*. One important aspect of friendship for Aristotle is that it provides occasions for mutual accountability and correction: genuine friends are able to hold up a mirror to each other, correct each other when they go wrong, and acknowledge when individual actions harm or hinder the community they share.[56] This insight could be a useful

[54] In the wider literature on habits, it is often argued that important others, such as parents, friends and partners, as well as teachers and schools, influence whether or not a behaviour becomes habitual. This can be in the form of role modelling the behaviour or imitating the example of another (Andolina *et al.*, 2003; Clary and Miller, 1986; Law, Shek and Ma, 2013), which has its roots in a process Bandura (1977) refers to as 'vicarious learning' – where 'observing the behaviour of significant others may affect one's decision to … [perform that behaviour] and, therefore, to imitate it' (Aarts, Paulussen and Schaalma, 1997, p. 367). Important others can also influence behaviour by encouraging and valuing it (Hart and Fegley, 1995; Pancer and Pratt, 1999), expecting it (Callero, Howard and Piliavin, 1987), and/or providing support for it to occur (Law, Shek and Ma, 2013; Marta and Pozzi, 2008). Arthur *et al.* (2017, p. 33) found that 'those with a habit of service were more likely to be at education institutions which had actively encouraged their involvement rather than passively allowed them to participate'.

[55] For Aristotle's extended discussion of friendship, see *NE,* Books 8 and 9. Aristotle thought that friendships are necessary for all persons (*NE,* 1155a5, 1169b3-23), can exemplify and mirror behavior to each other (1169b34-1170a4, 1171b12-13), provide partners with whom to share 'conversation and thought' (1170b6-19), can lighten burdens in stressful times (1171a22-31), and present opportunities to habituate virtuous action and affection (1155a6-10, 1171a22-27, 1171b13-28). Of course, the quality of the friendship is important (*NE,* 1172a4-14 and 1156a6-1157b5). For a helpful analysis of Aristotle's philosophy of friendship see Cooper (1980).

[56] See *NE*, 1171b11-14; cf. 1155a13-14.

[56] Recent studies seem to support this. See also Miller (2014a, pp. 231-232; 2014b, pp. 142-149).

supplement to #iwill's 'embedded' principle. 'Embedded' social action might promote accountability by encouraging youth to engage in existing communities where they are more likely to be held accountable and where they will be more aware of how their social action helps or harms a particular group of people.[57] In this way, the accountability that accompanies embeddedness might help to ensure that social action is responsible and 'socially impactful.'

6. Connecting the Individual and Community (Socially Impactful)

So far, we have explored how #iwill's habit of quality social action might align with features of an Aristotelian virtue. At this point, one distinction between a habit and a virtue becomes critical: whereas habits can be good or bad and ordered toward good or bad ends, virtues are necessarily good habits oriented toward good ends. This distinction explains why a habit of social action must be considered a virtue and not a mere skill or routine.[58]

Helpfully, #iwill offers resources to conceptualize the habit of social action as a virtue. Indeed, its six quality principles specify how this habit is understood as 'good', which, as we have seen, parallels the features of an Aristotelian virtue. To complete the comparison, however, we need to specify what constitutes the 'good' toward which #iwill's habit of social action is directed. Here, #iwill's 'socially impactful' principle and 'double-benefit' model become especially relevant.

As mentioned above, #iwill holds that youth social action must be 'socially impactful' and positively influence the communities in which the action is performed. Ideally, #iwill seeks to promote youth social action that achieves a 'double benefit' for both individual participants and the community being helped. #iwill's outcomes framework – focusing on both individual and community outcomes – specifies ways in which these benefits might be understood and promoted.

In section II, we argued that one limitation of #iwill's current framework is a lack of clarity about how individual and community outcomes in the double-benefit model relate. Arthur, Harrison, and Taylor (2015) suggest a helpful revision in making 'character' rather than 'emotional intelligence' the link between individual and community outcomes. An Aristotelian approach might further illuminate this connection and suggest an even more comprehensive model for understanding the relationship between individuals and communities.

Aristotle identifies the 'good' toward which virtue should aim as 'flourishing' (*eudaimonia*).[59] In modern societies, we often interpret such 'flourishing' as an individualistic form of subjective happiness, the state of individual joy or satisfaction. Aristotle, however, offers a much more capacious view that defines flourishing in terms of objective well-being and not subjective mental states.[60] For Aristotle, flourishing consists in achieving the excellences or virtues characteristic of a being of a certain kind. A flourishing human being, for example, achieves a kind of excellence

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[57] Arthur *et al.* (2017, p. 22) found a positive correlation between participating in youth social action and having a parent, guardian, or friend that also serves in the community.

[58] For an extended account of the relationship between virtue and goodness, see Annas (2011, pp. 100-118).

[59] *NE* 1097a35-1098a21.

[60] See Lamb (2017).

in the distinctive activities, dispositions, and relationships that form a human life.[61] Importantly, for Aristotle, a human life is fundamentally social and thus embedded within particular social and political communities. This means that an individual cannot fully flourish when the community is not flourishing, and that a community cannot fully flourish when an individual member of it is not fully flourishing.[62] An individual is related to community as a part to a whole.

This Aristotelian model then affirms the importance of #iwill's 'double-benefit' model and explains why quality social action, if done well, should produce benefits for both individual participants and the communities they serve. But this Aristotelian conception of individuals and their communities might also add a twist to how the 'double-benefit' model is conceptualized and communicated. Consider Figure 5 below, with the circle in the centre representing the individual and the surrounding circles representing various communities in which the individual is a part. This model visualizes the ways in which individuals – and thus individual outcomes – are nested with various communities. Of course, this figure is simplified for visual clarity. Communities often overlap in asymmetrical ways, while others hardly overlap at all. The diagram below can accommodate any conceivable asymmetry or variation, so long as the individual is fully circumscribed within their respective communities.

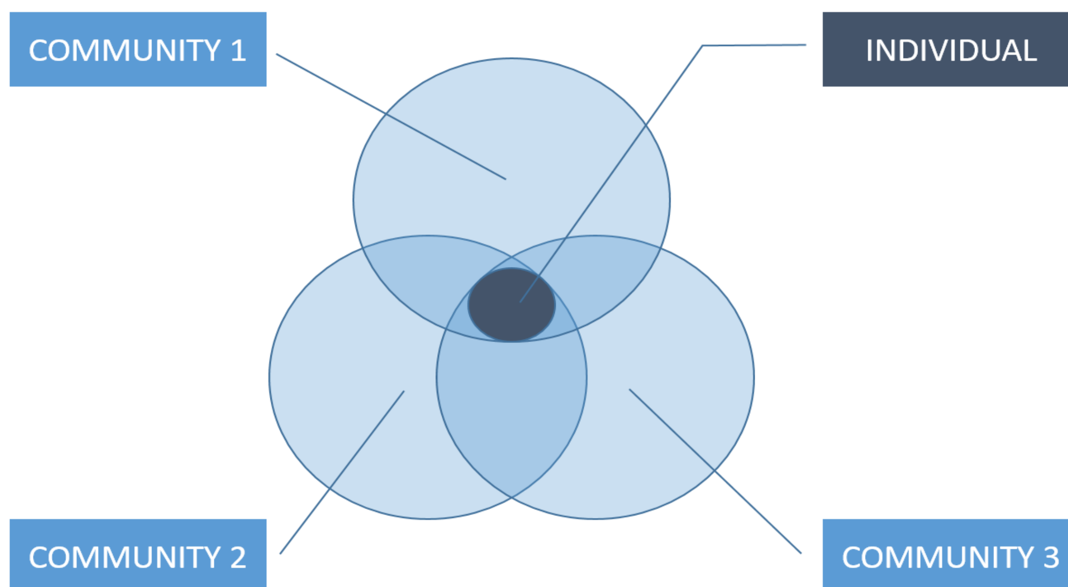

Figure 5: An Aristotelian double-benefit model.

What is striking about this Aristotelian model is how it compares with the two models of the 'double-benefit' framework in Figures 3 and 4. The original double-benefit model in Figure 3 presents individual and community benefits as completely separate, with emotional intelligence

[61] *NE* 1097b22-29, 1106a17-24, 1139a16-18. See also Russell (2015, pp. 20-23). For a contemporary discussion of happiness and eudaimonia (including subjective and objective elements), see Annas (2011, pp. 119-168).

[62] *NE* 1097b9-12, 1169b17-23, 1170a12.

as the only link. The revised double benefit in Figure 4 rightly recognizes a stronger connection between individual and community outcomes by presenting the two as overlapping circles, with character as the overlap. The Aristotelian model in Figure 5 uses concentric circles, extending outward from a particular individual, to highlight how individuals can never be completely separate or distinct from their communities. They are necessarily embedded within various communities, which overlap to varying degrees.

Such a model might be consistent with the revised double-benefit presented by Arthur, Harrison and Taylor (2015) in Figure 4. Since they focus on the relationship between *types of outcomes* rather than between individuals and communities themselves, the difference may simply be in the presentation of the model, not its content. But given that how we relate to others is shaped by how we perceive those relations, it is instructive to explore what an Aristotelian model might offer to the #iwill campaign. Four implications are worth highlighting for consideration.

First, an Aristotelian model provides conceptual clarity on the relationship between individual and community benefits, which, as mentioned in Part II, is missing from the current #iwill framework. The conceptual clarity might help #iwill's providers and youth participants consider, practically, how they relate to each other.

Second, the Aristotelian model highlights the necessarily interrelation of individual and community benefits in a more fundamental way. In particular, it encourages outcomes that promote both individual and community benefits and discourages outcomes that might sacrifice or diminish benefits to one or the other. This might be relevant to #iwill in two ways. First, it might provide more motivation and clarity to providers, particularly those not currently working with young people, about why helping youth participants actually serves their larger community, even when it might take additional time, effort, and resources. Second, it helps to ensure that individual social action actually benefits the community, not just the individual. As it stands, the current models suggest that certain individual outcomes fall outside the circle of community. This creates the risk that social action might achieve individual benefits that neglect, or even undermine, benefits to the community. Consider the recent phenomenon of 'voluntourism,' where individuals (often youth) parachute into a distant community for a week or two at a time, performing community service with little knowledge of the existing community and its larger social structures. While such work can help to address discrete needs, voluntourism can also cause harm (Guttentag, 2009), not least for its potential to propagate neo-colonial attitudes among participants (Palacios, 2010). As such, voluntourism can actually undermine community outcomes rather than support them. A model that recognizes the interrelation between individual and community places constraints on the types of social action that might be considered 'socially impactful'.

Relatedly, this Aristotelian model might allay an objection to youth social action. One worry is that some of forms of social action (especially when conceived as pure 'charity') perpetuate power differentials, intentionally or not, by encouraging participants to assume power and privilege and thereby perform a kind of individual 'self-sacrifice' for the sake of the community.[63] This illusion

[63] For discussion, see Catlett and Proweller (2011); Marullo, Moayedi and Cooke (2009); Morton (1995); Tilley-Lubbs (2009).

prevents participants from forming genuine relationships of solidarity and community with those whom they interact. An Aristotelian model might help participants avoid this hazard by showing they are not 'separate' form the community but part of it, and that their own flourishing is integrally tied up in the flourishing of the community. This conceptual model might encourage seeing social action not simply as an act of self-sacrifice, but as an expression of solidarity and community.

Finally, this model brings into view the interconnection of the virtues and the need to incorporate moral virtues that govern social relationships. One of the issues raised by Arthur, Harrison and Taylor (2015) is that #iwill's individual outcomes tend to prioritize *performance virtues* and neglect *moral virtues*.[64] Their emphasis on 'character' as the link between individual and community outcomes helps to bring moral virtues back into view. An Aristotelian approach would further specify these virtues and how they relate to quality social action. In this context, a particularly relevant Aristotelian virtue would be *justice*, which helps to govern social relationships and ensure that others are given what they are due.[65] For social action to be 'socially impactful' and actually promote relationships of justice within and between communities, participants need to develop not only 'optimism', 'determination', and 'emotional intelligence,' but a virtue of justice that both enables them to understand social relationships and structures, how they are disordered, and how to put them aright *and* motivates them to pursue more just relationships and structures in light of that understanding. A virtue of justice would help to ensure that a habit of social action is 'socially impactful' in ways that promote justice rather than diminish or impede it.

Of course, as Aristotle recognized, to exercise this virtue and know what justice requires in particular situations requires the virtue of prudence or practical wisdom.[66] Without practical wisdom, we may know what justice is in the abstract, but not be knowledgeable or motivated to do it well in particular circumstances. The relationship between justice and practical wisdom highlights the relationship between #iwill's 'reflective' and 'socially impactful' principles. It also suggests that virtues of justice and practical wisdom might be necessary additions to the list of individual outcomes. An Aristotelian approach that recognizes the interconnection of the virtues and overlapping relationships between individuals and communities highlights the need for these virtues to be a more specific and explicit part of the framework.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have attempted to show how #iwill's emphasis on a habit of social action and double-benefit model align with an Aristotelian account of virtue and, in turn, how this developmental and aspirational account might contribute to #iwill's efforts to conceptualize and cultivate a habit of social action that reflects its six quality principles. In particular, #iwill's 'progressive' principle coheres with an Aristotelian emphasis on habituation and cultivation for

[64] #iwill's individual outcomes (which includes 'determination', 'managing feelings', and 'self-control') may more easily accommodate virtues of character – such as courage or temperance – that govern our affective responses to particular obstacles or difficulties.
[65] See *NE*, Book 5 for Aristotle's discussion of justice.
[66] *NE* 1144b-1145a2.

life, and its commitment to 'youth-led' social action fits with an Aristotelian approach to learning by doing and the need to habituate virtue from an early age. Moreover, #iwill's emphasis on 'reflective' social action entails the importance of practical wisdom, while its commitment to 'challenging' and 'enjoyable' social action aligns with an Aristotelian conception of virtue as an 'excellence' that can be cultivated, in part, by 'putting on virtue.' Finally, #iwill's emphasis on 'embedded' social action that is also 'socially impactful' corresponds with an Aristotelian account of the relationship between individuals and communities.

Throughout our analysis, we have attempted to show how an Aristotelian account of a virtue can help to address the four conceptual challenges identified in Part II. First, it provides a more holistic and capacious conception of a habit as a cognitive and affective disposition that cannot be reduced to behavioural outcomes or intentions toward future participation. Second, it provides more clarity on the relationship between the two spheres of the double-benefit model and offers a way to conceptualize the connection in a way that gives proper weight to community outcomes, recognizes the social sources of individual development, and places constraints on social action that does not benefit both the community and the individual. Third, it highlights the value not only of particular performance virtues, such as optimism and determination, but also of moral and intellectual virtues, such as justice and practical wisdom, that can ensure that social action is sensitive to particular circumstances and promotes just relationships and structures. Finally, it offers resources that can help to increase conceptual clarity and thereby encourage consistency in how #iwill's framework is understood and applied by diverse providers.

While #iwill is only one campaign to increase social action, its ambitious goals, widespread support, and sophisticated conceptual model make it a particularly valuable model for others to emulate. As #iwill and its partners continue to develop and apply this model, we hope to have shown why an Aristotelian model of character education can provide useful conceptual resources. Careful attention to Aristotelian insights can affirm and amplify #iwill's efforts to increase youth social action and cultivate a virtuous habit for life.

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