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The Empowerment Loop
- Identity and Confidence among Youth Politicians
in Eastern Africa

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Abstract

This paper will develop a theoretical model of empowerment, based on the sociology of emotions and a field study on a Swedish development program for young politicians in Eastern-Africa. Conceptualizing the process of empowerment I will build on theories of confidence (Barbalet 2001), interaction rituals (Collins 1993) and identity (Turner and Stets 2006). Trying this model against an empirical material consisting of interviews with the participants of the development program I will show how the main obstacle of an empowerment process is denied identities, something that particularity affects women in leadership positions. Explaining how we can understand the process of empowerment from a sociology of emotions - point of view I will then discuss how can it be strategically manipulated.

Keywords: Empowerment, sociology of emotions, youth, politics, development, identity, confidence, Interaction rituals

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1. Introduction

“What keeps me going is that everyday the situation keeps getting worse [...] Yes, the situation keeps getting worse in Uganda. And what keeps me going is that it's going to get so worse that it can't be there. That it will die out.”

Jonathan 2013-05-03

This quote is taken from an interview during my field trip to Uganda. I was there to study empowerment processes and one of my interviewees had just told me how he never had given up on writing election manifestos that were constantly dispatched by his party. When reflecting on what kept him trying anyway, to be heard in a party where he was convinced no one listened to him, in a political system that did not tolerate opposition, he gave me this answer. Despite the odds and an impossible situation he is confident that it eventually will get better, though only after it's gotten worse. By keep on trying and staying active, he was positive that when that time comes, he will be both prepared and victorious. Where did he find that conviction? How did he stay confident?

The aim of this paper is to study the emotional sources or affective base of empowerment and how the level of individual empowerment can be strategically manipulated. Using the Swedish development project Program for Young Politicians in Africa 2013 (PYPA) as platform for a case study, the research question of this paper is;

How can we detect and understand the process of empowerment from a sociology of emotions - point of view and how can it be strategically manipulated?

The first step to answer this question will be to conceptualize empowerment, combining theories of confidence (Barbalet 2001), interaction rituals (Collins 1993) and identity (Turner and Stets 2006). Then, in order to understand the validity of the concept, the theoretical framework will be tried on a case study. By using the theoretical framework/model as a tool for evaluating processes of empowerment at the PYPA I will

also be able to evaluate the theory itself. Lastly, building on the empirical material, I will discuss how empowerment can be manipulated by reconnecting it to relevant social norms and structures.

1.1 Previous research and a presentation of PYPA

Empowerment has not previously been conceptualized from the perspective of sociology of emotions. In the field of sociology, specific emotions have been used in order to understand the link between structures, agency and social change to understand agency is vital to understand social change. Barbalet (2001) uses a set of emotions to illustrate the role of emotions in social processes, arguing that there is an emotional dimension to all social phenomena and practically all social phenomena can be better understood by using sociology of emotions (Barbalet 2002:3-6). Further, emotions have been an important part in explaining social processes and phenomena ranging from joking cultures (Fine & de Soucey) to social movements (Barbalet 2001) and politics (Holmes 2013). Likewise, Scheff uses shame and pride to explain, among other things, social situations of violence and conflict (Scheff 1991, 1997), and many other specific emotions, like confidence, love, jealousy, resentment and anger, have been explained and analyzed to better understand their role in social processes (Barbalet 2011; Felmlee&Sprecher 2006; Clanton 2006; Holmes 2013). Further, the function of emotions in micro-level interactions has been explored by for example Clark (1987), in her theory of sympathy, and Collins (1993), in building the theory of emotional energy. Mary Holmes (2013) writes about women in politics from a sociology of emotions perspective, focusing on anger as a long forbidden but nevertheless empowering emotion. Yet, these emotions have often been studied separately, and though I will build on previous research by primarily Turner and Stets, Barbalet and Collins to understand empowerment, I would argue that empowerment is not the same as for example confidence, or the absence of shame, nor is it about other emotional states that has been studied within sociology. Empowerment is not a single emotion in itself or a fixed emotional state, but rather an emotional process of moving from low agency to higher, based on the outcome of social interaction and confirmation. Thus, my aim in this paper is

to move further than single emotions and look at what is supposed to be an empowering process of a development program for young politicians in East-Africa.

My first interest in this development program evolved out of a curiosity concerning PYPA as a platform for a seemingly perfect interaction ritual (Collins1993). Moreover, I wondered about what kind of challenges a cross-cultural project, intended on empowering those who have been deemed dis-empowered by the program, political youth, would face. However, my intentions with this paper is not to evaluate the program. The questions I had about PYPA instead resulted in a focus on the conceptualization of empowerment which also is the focus of this study. Thus I used PYPA as a case study since it is a deliberate and practical attempt to augment the agency of its participants, and it also made it easy to study the role of social interactions by matching the program with Collins theory of emotional energy.

The meaning of empowerment in this paper follows the purpose of my case study (PYPA) which is a program for empowering young politicians. Therefore, in this paper, when writing about empowerment, it is to be interpreted as being empowered as a politician. This however does not imply that the theories and results I'm presenting here could not lead to general conclusions about empowerment.

1.2 The case of PYPA

The Program for Young Politicians in Africa is a Swedish development aid program hosted by three Swedish party-affiliated organizations; Kristdemokratiskt Internationellt Center (KIC), Centerns Internationella stiftelse (CIF) and Olof Palmes Center (OPC), with financial support from the Swedish board for development aid, SIDA. The aim of the program is to increase the participant's influence and participation in the political sphere of the targeted countries as well as strengthen their capacities for democratic leadership (“Programdokument för Program for Young Politicians in Africa -PYPA, 2012-2015”). The countries participating in the program are divided into three geographical areas; East, West and South, each of these areas hosts a PYPA divided into three parts or “academies”.

The participants spend two weeks together during each of the academies that follows a tight schedule of lessons and workshops in subjects such as good governance, democracy, political ideology, gender studies and youth perspective. The educators come from Sweden as well as the hosting countries and sometimes organizations that are not connected to either. PYPAs also aim at facilitating networking among the participants both across political parties and national borders and hosts a few pan-african events as well as supporting alumni structures (ibid).

2. Theory

In order to understand how an individual's level of empowerment can be manipulated, the concept must itself be understood. The definition of “empower” is to “make (someone) stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights” (Oxford dictionaries 2013). However, to know what to look for in the field it is also necessary to theoretically conceptualizing empowerment. I will do this by combining theories of interaction rituals (Collins 1993), confidence as the affective basis for human agency (Barbalet 2001) and identity (Turner & Stets 2000). Collins theory touches upon confidence and, to a lesser extent identity, but only as something that is inherent in the process of the interaction ritual. To understand the process of empowerment, however, both confidence and identity however needs to be further explained. As emotions are *in* the social relationships (Barbalet 2002:4), Collins theory of interaction rituals can be used to understand *how* the right emotions might be aroused. The right emotions in this case would be the emotions that provides agency, which is explained by Barbalets theory of confidence. Further, while interaction rituals can build or reinforce identities, all of ones identities will not be consistent with the interaction rituals we engage in. They do however play a vital role in how we fair in the rituals, thus to understand how empowerment can be manipulated, we need to understand how conflicting identities affect and are affected by these rituals. First I will present the different theories separately, and then proceed to explain their respective roles in the process of empowerment with the illustration of an empowerment loop, described later in this chapter.

2.1. Confidence and moral emotions

Since empowerment implies an ability to act, the power to do something, we need to understand the emotion behind agency. To study the process of going from a low level of agency to a higher level of agency we must identify agency in the empirical material. Understanding the emotion operating behind the process of increasing agency will also give further clues about how, on an emotional level, empowerment might be manipulated.

According to Barbalet, the affective base for human agency is confidence. We decide our course of action or whether to act or not by weighing our own capabilities, based on past experiences, against what we apprehend as a possible future. This is often done unconsciously, but how we estimate the possibility of succeeding determines how and if we're going to act, since our actions are based on a, sometimes unconscious, assured expectation of success (Barbalet 2001:82, 84, 86). As an example, the decision to go to a political meeting is based on the persons earlier experiences, not perhaps with political meetings, but with interacting with new people, talking politics and even taking a bus to the meeting place. We constantly and unconsciously do this kind of self projecting by combining different experiences from the past into possible future outcomes. Thus according to Barbalet: "The function of confidence then, is to promote social action" (Barbalet 2001:86). In the case of empowerment, confidence is needed to overcome social control (Barbalet 2001:86).

Confidence and shame are both emotions dependent on an image of our self (Scheff 2000:92; Barbalet 2001:86). (However, describing confidence as an emotion of self-projection doesn't mean it isn't also shaping our self-awareness or our image of our self.) While for example shame can prevent us from breaching norms or conventional rules of conduct and thus enforces social control, confidence is necessary to engage, act and go our own way (ibid.). Empowerment, then, is when our confidence is strong enough to make us sidestep or overcome the self-awareness that prevents us from breaching conformity and acting the way we want. Further, while confidence is an emotion of self-projection, social control is created through emotions of self-attention or self-awareness (Barbalet 2001:86; Scheff 2000:88; Turner & Stets 2006:548). Awareness of how we might look in the eyes of others triggers emotions that makes us conform to social norms and rules. We feel guilt when we have done something we believe others disapprove of and we feel shame when we believe others to view us with disgust or contempt. On the other hand, we feel proud and secure when we believe other to approve of who we are and what we do (Scheff 2000:88;Turner & Stets 2006:551-552).

Through our emotions we conform, in different extents, to the implicit rules that apply to the social context that we exist in, and under the influence of moral emotions for example shame and guilt, our actions are governed by the surrounding structures rather than being a manifestation of our own agency. When norms or cultural codes are transgressed, or if we fail to live up to normative expectations, it is recognized through a set of moral emotions that makes us self-conscious and prone to act and behave in a way that will not expose us to painful emotions such as shame and guilt (Turner&Stets 2006:551-553; Barbalet 2001:86-87, 94). Though, a significant difference between shame and guilt, is that guilt has its source in a specific action or course of action - we feel guilt when we are *doing* wrong. Shame, on the other hand, is felt when we *are* wrong (Sheff 2000:92; Turner & Stets 2006:552). To overcome shame is thus the real challenge when it comes to empowerment, since doing wrong is both implying agency (through the action that led to the feeling), as well as suggesting a capability of doing right (Sheff 2000:92).

2.2. Identities and understandings of self

Which norms and structures that applies to us depends on our identities, who we are and where we fit in the society. We all have a set of different identities that we wear in different social contexts, for example politician, parent, lawyer et cetera, and each identity has to operate among certain norms or cultural codes (Turner & Stets 2006:204). Further, we constantly seek consistency between our different identities. Some are more difficult to combine than others and these combinations might therefore provoke other people by transgressing norms or cultural codes (Turner&Stets 2006:551-553; Turner& Stets 2006:204). If, on the other hand, we experience consistency between our different identities and those identities are verified by others instead of met with questioning or ignorance, confidence is much easier to achieve (Barbalet 2001:101).

We also all have a master identity, overarching our different identities and containing our core values and most important principles, and also directs our other identities according to what we might call our moral compass (Turner & Stets2006:548). As long as

our other identities stays attuned to our moral compass, or in other words when our master identity is consistent with our other identities, we feel secure and confident. When, however, our other identities leads us astray, the master identity will alert us by activating moral emotions like guilt or shame until we either correct our behavior or redefine our master identity (Turner & Stets 2006:548-549). A similar process is taking place when we feel exposed to moral emotions from others, for example disgust or contempt. Depending on the kind of socially conforming emotion and to what degree we experience it, we either correct our behavior or we seek other ways of getting acceptance and verify our identities, for example by changing social communities. In a lesser degree, emotions like shame and guilt can make us correct a deviant behavior and conform to social norms while we are more likely to repress strong feelings of shame and guilt, possibly by transforming them into less painful emotions like anger or seek out a different sample of people to verify ourselves (Turner&Stets 2006:553; Scheff 2000:90).

In summary, the amount of confidence needed to go outside the norms would depend on what identity we are currently trying to verify, as well as the social context and the structures we are affected by at the moment. As we need past experiences in order to self-project we gain confidence by engaging in social interaction where we also can verify our identities with others, be accepted and thus avoid emotions of dis-empowerment (Barbalet 2001:101; Turner & Stets 2006:204). The amount of confidence we can muster correlates with the amount of acceptance we have received in previous interactions with others. To be verified, to receive appreciation, admiration and respect, gives us a positive basis for self-projection. To receive critique or to have our identity questioned might instead make us experience shame. Thus, the development of both our confidence and our identities is dependent on social interactions with other people (Barbalet 2001:101; Turner & Stets 2006:204). In order to understand how these components of the empowerment process affect each other, they need to be viewed in the context of an interaction ritual.

2.3 Interaction rituals

Following Barbalet's as well as Turner's and Stet's arguments that confidence and confirmation of identity is something we gain by successful interaction, interaction with others becomes in itself vital for empowerment. Using Collins theory of interaction rituals and emotional energy, we can look at PYPA as platform for several interaction rituals and thus understand how it is able to increase confidence, and thus empowerment, in its participants.

An interaction ritual can be described as any kind of social interaction, it can be a conversation between two people as well as a political rally or passive co-presence at a school (Collins 1993:208). The main objectives when entering into an interaction ritual is to create group solidarity and gain as high levels of emotional energy as possible. High levels of emotional energy consists of feelings of enthusiasm and confidence. The more a person is recognized and accepted in an interaction ritual the more emotional energy and thus confidence will she be able to gain from the interaction. Gaining high levels of emotional energy will both give her means to participate in new interaction rituals and confidence to do so (Collins 1993:211-212; Barbalet 2001:86). A person can also build up a long term fund of confidence and enthusiasm by continuing participating in successful interaction rituals, making it easier to confront more and more challenging obstacles (Collins 1993:211-212).

According to Collins, the motivation for a person to engage in social interaction is a desire for gaining emotional energy. As emotional energy works, in interaction rituals, the same way as money works in trade it is possible that an unsuccessful interaction ritual leaves some of it's participants emotionally drained (Collins1993:205,211). Using PYPA as an example there are good reason to participate in the rituals that takes place during one academy since the stakes for emotional energy are high and the costs seems to be fairly low. Moreover, the emotional energy is rather a spill-off from producing group solidarity which in itself is a very rewarding experience (Collins 1993:206-208). Seeing PYPA as cluster of smaller interaction rituals they can be everything from a discussion during a

coffee break, playing volleyball after class hours or demanding group exercises in class. As a little over forty participants gather for two weeks, living together and attending a tight schedule of lessons, workshops and social activities, both the physical density and the “boundness” (Collins 1993:206) of group interactions are high, which means that whatever emotion that is produced during the interaction ritual will increase greatly compared to say, a group of five who gather for a weekend (ibid) Furthermore, the participants focus of attention is constantly drawn to the same themes as the overall common ground for the gathered people is politics and they are all attending a schedule of various topics related to that theme. Through the discourse of the program staff they are also shaped into a group with a common identity of young, East-African politicians which facilitates their recognition of their common circumstances and in turn the commonality of their emotions (Collins 1993:206-208). The longer and more frequent the interaction rituals are, the more effective they become in producing group solidarity and emotional energy. Thus, at the end of their two weeks together, the participants of the first PYPA academy ought to be able to participate in highly rewarding interaction rituals at a very low cost of emotional energy (Collins 1993:206-207).

During the interaction rituals, the participants will also be part of creating collective symbols that are tied to the interaction ritual and which can be used as a deposit of confidence and emotional energy when they leave the group (Collins 1993:213). For example, the discourse of PYPA creates a common identity for the participants and infuses it with certain paroles about youth and empowerment. These collective symbols; the paroles, the concepts et cetera, that were created and used during the academy may serve to boost confidence in the participants when facing hardships at home, prolonging their confidence and sense of group solidarity and empowerment (Collins 1993:212-213).

However, not all interaction rituals are open to everyone who wishes to participate. Even during a secluded event such as PYPA a certain kind of cultural capital, certain social criteria as well as material means are sometimes necessary in order to be welcomed into smaller rituals during PYPA (Collins 1993:214). This means that if you are not from the

right background, even though you're admitted to the program, you are not welcome in the interaction ritual.

2.4 The empowerment loop

To conceptualize the process of increasing agency, that is the process of empowerment, the three parts of this theoretical framework can be illustrated as a loop, see figure 1. The loop starts with an interaction ritual, it can be something as simple as a conversation with a friend or a family member. During the interaction ritual the persons entering it will either have their identities questioned or confirmed and thus they will gain or lose confidence. If the identity is confirmed it will render the person more confident and more confidence also reinforces the identity; a confirmed identity leads to stronger confidence, and thus an even more confirmed identity.

Though, this empowerment loop may also be reversed and turned into a disempowerment loop. In an unsuccessful ritual, the persons entering it have their identities questioned and/or their confidence weakened, and will leave the ritual feeling more insecure about their roles and with less belief in their capabilities, being afraid of engaging in new interaction rituals (even less so if they are more advanced), unless they have an excess of emotional energy to once again reverse the loop or they find another kind of interaction ritual and start over again. If, on the other hand, the identity is denied, it will weaken the person's confidence which in turn also weakens the identity. If the interaction ritual is successful to some of the persons entering it those to whom it were successful will leave the ritual with confirmed identities and more confidence, which drives them forward in the loop towards more advanced interaction rituals, demanding higher level of emotional energy or perhaps more material assets, where there is also more to gain. For example a young politician in conversation with an older member of the party will consciously or subconsciously seek acceptance from her party member as a politician or as any other identity for that matter -it could perhaps be both as a politician and a university graduate. If these identities are confirmed, that is, if the young politician is treated by her party member

as one would treat a fellow politician, her confidence will increase based on the constant building of positive past experiences that is their conversation. She will also experience group solidarity if the conversation goes well and gain emotional energy that will create a want to seek out more similar experiences. However, if she is treated with disrespect or ignorance she will lose confidence as the past experience of their conversation will be negative instead. Not gaining as much emotional energy from the conversation as she gave in order to participate there will be less want for similar experiences in the future. The loop would then instead be reversed.

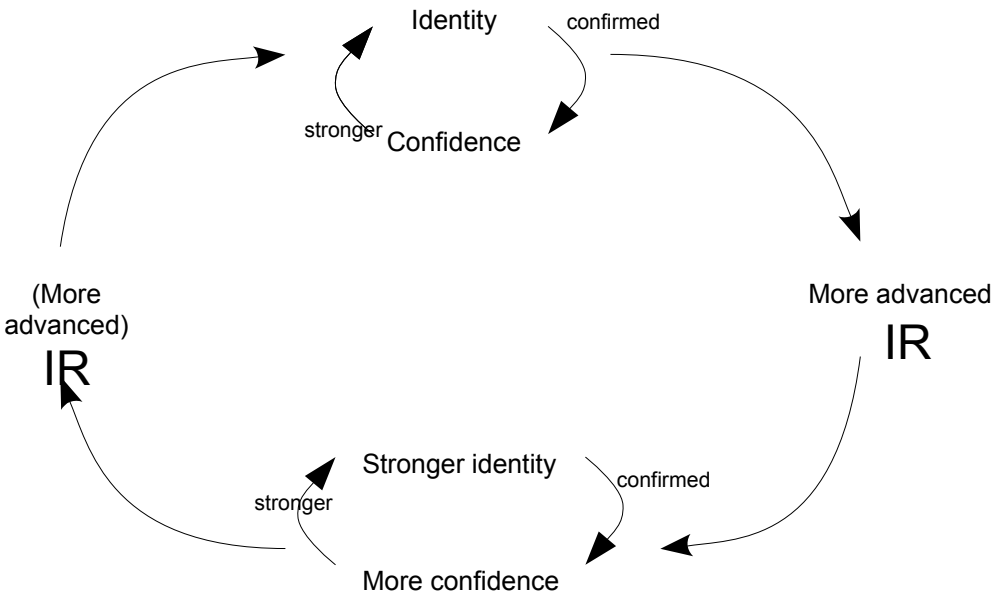


Figure 1 The empowerment loop

The variations of success and failure are of course unlimited and a person entering an interaction ritual might gain more confidence in the area of politics, strengthening her identity as a politician but at the same time lose confidence as a mother and start to question her identity in her family. Looking outside my particular case of PYP, the society is full of potential interaction rituals. By entering an empowerment loop during the

PYPA an individual would, as long as she stays in the loop, be able to extend it to take on new rituals outside of the program and perhaps outside her comfort zone and thus face more and more difficult social and societal challenges. By applying this model to the empirical material gathered during my field trip to Uganda, I will show how empowerment works and how the participants of PYPA managed to manipulate the loop themselves.

3. Methodology

To be able to understand how the process of empowerment can be recognized and manipulated the theory would need to be tested against an empirical material. PYPA, besides from having the clear aim of increasing empowerment in its participants also tries to do what, according to my theoretical framework is an important part of the process of empowerment; it tries to combine two identities, youth and politician. As stated above, the PYPA could also be described as platform for interaction rituals where the participants get the opportunities to gain confidence through interaction with each other, as well as creating a sort of trust fund for emotional energy to be stored for future challenges. Before proceeding to the analysis I will explain the process of gathering and interpreting the empirical material.

3.2. Selecting interviewees

As my aim with this study was to create a better understanding of the emotional processes of empowerment I choose to focus on young politicians as they were an easily defined group, namely youths between 16-35 years with an engagement in a parliamentary political party and with an outspoken social commitment. Being a well structured attempt to create or invest empowerment in those who are deemed dis-empowered, due to discriminating age structures, the PYPA program was a perfect arena for my study. The participants stayed together even after course hours, which facilitated interviewing opportunities and providing yet another, social, platform for the study. I also attended several of the lessons and workshops during the two weeks of my trip, both to gather material for the interviews, find interviewees and gain their trust and to get an overview of the context I was going to study in. I also talked to both the Swedish and Ugandan facilitators in order to better understand the challenges they faced in putting together a cross cultural education program.

The number of respondents were based on a balancing of the restricted time I had to get

to know the participants and do the interviews, and at the same time to get enough manageable material. I chose to spread the sample equally between the three represented countries; Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. The result was a sample made up by two female and two male participants from each country with an age span ranging from twenty-two years up to thirty-four. The total number of respondents then added up to twelve. I made sure to have both the ruling party and an opposition party represented from each country since the motive for political engagement could determine which side you would choose. Besides the criteria of country and gender the respondents were chosen based on their participation in the classroom and discussions during lunch and tea breaks. It was not that I was looking for particularly outspoken persons, however, trust and a good relation to the respondents were vital in getting them to talk freely, and so I choose respondents who were easily engaged in conversation outside of the classroom. It would be worth noting that despite the difference in gender and nationality, the sample was made up of a rather homogenous group regarding socio-economic status. All of my respondents were university graduates and most of them also came from middle-class families. There were, however, a few exceptions which made very interesting examples, and there was also the issue of tribes which I will describe further in the analysis chapter. Suffice to say that the sample, being narrow in way of socio-economic background, provided a somewhat limited testing of the theoretical framework and the empowerment loop.

I often had to ensure the interviewees that I was not part of the organizations hosting the PYPA as most of the participants seemed to believed. Further, while no one of those I asked to interview refused they were sometimes visibly more interested when they learned that I was working on my own. This insecurity about who I worked for might have influenced the way the interviewees answered to my questions, especially when talking about their thoughts of the program. However, I had not expected them to openly criticize the PYPA and my questions where not designed to be answered in that way. Though I received a lot of suggestions for improvements and even some complaints that the interviewees wanted me to pass on to the organizers.

3.3. Designing interviews

My aim was to make my respondents talk about personal experiences within the area of politics, and so I chose to work with a semi structured interview guide which focused on five main themes; 1. Structural background and defining norms, 2. PYPAs, 3. Social control vs. confidence, 4. Supporting or empowering emotions, and 5. What do you need and where do you find empowerment. The main themes were introduced during the interview by the first question in each theme and then followed up if needed, see table 1.

Though emotions might be experienced collectively, for example several people feeling sadness at a funeral, they are still personal, depending on each persons own history and social context, and private. Therefore, I did not expect my respondents to openly describe their emotions to me or to be able to always formulate them into neat sentences. My aim was instead to develop discussions, follow up interesting stories and interact with the respondents in order to make them tell me about their emotional experiences. Looking for displays of emotions through body language and tone of voice sometimes also helped me to know how to proceed during the interviews, when to stay silent and wait for further explanation or when to ask follow-up questions (Wettergren 2013:4). To better understand the special context of the PYPAs program I also participated in, and observed some of, the activities as well as some of the staff meetings during the two weeks of field study.

<p>Structural background/Defining norms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about yourself? 	<p>PYPA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you participate? • What expectations did you have? • Have your expectations been met? 	<p>Social control vs confidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does others react to your political commitments/achievements? • What are your biggest challenges/obstacles?
<p>What kind of Supporting/(Em)Powering emotions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How come you decided to engage in politics? • What keeps you going/What motivates you? 	<p>What do you need?/ Where do you find empowerment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What questions would you prefer your party to focus on? • How do you gather strength? 	

Table 1 Interview guide, 3rd version.

Before my trip to Uganda I conducted four test interviews with young Swedish politicians in order to evaluate my interview guide and avoid unnecessary pitfalls. In retrospect there were some differences between the Swedish youths and the East-African youths regarding possibilities to choose coping strategies in face of challenges in their political careers. However, I didn't anticipate that those differences were as significant as to change my interview guide before I went to Uganda. Based on the test interviews I reckoned that the subject of political engagement would be something the respondents would like to talk about as long as they were not asked to openly evaluate the program or the the current political situations in their respective home countries. Further, the overcoming of these obstacles was also facilitated by my participating observation during the academy, introducing myself to my respondents' understandings. As a complement to

the interviews I also took notes of my observations during the courses and social activities as well as after having particularly interesting chats with the participants during breaks.

3.4. The interview guide

In order to construct an interview guide suitable for my study I choose to work with rather broad themes as guidelines. There would be no point in asking direct question about emotions since it would rather be recounted situations or the dialogue in itself that would display how the respondent felt about my questions (Wettergren 2013:6). Using the semi structured interview guide as a starting point, the interviews had a strong tendency towards a narrative character. I chose my themes using the hypothesis that empowerment is a based on at least confidence (Barbalet 2001:84). The first theme, Structural background and defining norms, focused on the interviewees identity and how they presented themselves. The second theme, PYP A, aimed at what effects the PYP A had on their emotional processes as political activists and contained questions about why they had chosen to participate in the academy and their thoughts about it so far. It also focused a little bit on the contents of the academy and relations with fellow participants. The third theme, Social control vs. confidence, aimed at personal and political obstacles while the fourth theme, Supporting or empowering emotions, aimed at how the interviewees found the strength to keep moving and how they looked at and apprehended the hardships themselves. The last theme, What do you need and where do you find empowerment, focused on how the interviewees handled these obstacles, what strategies they applied or who they sought help from.

3.6. Coding and analysis

All the interviews where fully transcribed and coded using a CAQDAS system. Each interview took between thirty and 50 minutes. After transcribing the interviews, I used thematic coding (Marshall&Rossman 2011:213) to find the links between the empirical material and the theoretical concept of empowerment according to the table 2 below. Starting with rather broad themes I worked through the transcriptions between two to five

times creating sub codes before comparing the results of the different interviews.

Identity	Woman, man, opposition party, ruling party, family member, educated, representative/elected, profession.	Confirmed, Denied, Trying
Interaction ritual	Successful, unsuccessful, denied entry, partly denied, level to low.	
Confidence		
Shame	Repressed, transformed	Emotional loop
Other emotion	Pride, guilt, anger, envy	Repressed, emotional loop

Table 2 Excerpt from coding tree.

The field notes from the two weeks at PYPA amounted to twenty-three pages, they were however used mainly as a secondary material as I chose to focus on the interviews.

4. Analysis and Results

As I have now presented my theoretical framework for this study, conceptualizing empowerment as an intertwined process of gaining confidence, verifying identities and gathering emotional energy, I will proceed to compare the theories behind the concept with the empirical material from my field trip describing how we can detect and understand the process of empowerment and how can it be strategically manipulated.

The process of increasing the individual level of empowerment in the participants of PYPA can be described as a repeating two-step process involving three goals. By participating in interaction rituals the participants are able to gain confidence, confirm their identities as politicians and gain emotional energy to be used to continue with more advanced interaction rituals. If their participation in an interaction ritual proves successful they will want to move on to more advanced interaction rituals and they will also feel

capable of doing so - This is the process of empowerment.

4.1. Verifying identities, gaining and losing confidence

The issue of combining and verifying identities is the most obvious obstacle for the participants of PYPA. What brought the participants together at the academy at the first place is the seemingly difficult combination of two identities; being a youth and being a politician. Besides those, the ones that emerged most clearly from the material were related to tribes, the master identity and gender. Analyzing the empirical material also showed that the participants' confidence in different situations was indeed intertwined with their different identities as I will demonstrate by the quotes below.

4.1.1. Tribal identity

With the exception of the Kenyan interviewees, all the others mentioned concerns regarding combining a political career and tribal adherence. As it is more common to vote according to which tribe you belong rather than your own ideology, those who deviated from this pattern were, according to the interviewees, often viewed with suspicion or ignored. The same would happen if a politician tried to gain votes from outside his or her own tribe, making the options for campaigning for new votes difficult and also forcing the young politicians into internal hierarchies within their tribes where age often was considered an important factor. One interviewee told me what had happened when she vied for a position in her county for the party her tribe supported. As a young woman she was considered to be a hindrance to her party if she contested against supposedly better candidates as she was presumed to lose against other parties' representatives in the coming election. She told me;

“The village council decided that I was not to contest against this other man so they took me out of competition [...] I don't think about it, it's easier just to move on.”

Sarah 2013-05-02

Being a woman and a youth in this context interferes with her identity as a politician.

When I asked her about what she meant by 'move on' she told me she would continue her studies and try again when she got a bit older. Not confident she could overcome the obstacles she decided to wait them out. Since she puts her tribal identity above her political one she chooses not to change the crowd but to conform to the given identity of not being good enough. However, not wanting to “*think about it*” because “*it's easier to just move on*” can be seen as a way of coping with shame by simply ignoring it.

As some tribes had more of a disadvantageous reputation than others, being from the 'wrong' tribe could also be the reason a person's political identity was questioned. One interviewee told me that she was given nicknames at the academy, made up from the name of her tribe.

“You heard references in the class room to [name-tribe]? Yeah, that's me. I'm from the least developed region.”

Jenny 2013-05-01

Even though the nicknames were used in a joking manner by the other participants it was also a way of make her tribal identity visible, and a reminder of her supposedly inferior origins which did not mix well with her identity as a politician and a leader. However, rather than letting it affect her political identity negatively she used her origins to demonstrate to others how far she had managed to come despite the odds. Her tribal identity could still be a setback in her political career but she managed to use it for herself as a way of strengthening her identity as a politician. Leaning on past experiences of a difficult background she had confidence that she could handle future obstacles just as well. Instead of accepting it as a sign of inferiority she turned it into a source of confidence.

4.1.2. Morals and master identity

Most of my interviewees described themselves as religious and repeatedly mentioned faith and belief in god during the interviews. A persons religious identity often seems to be inextricably linked with what Turner and Stets called the master identity (Turner&Stets 2006:548) as it provides a moral compass on a personal level as well as societal norms on a

structural level. It would not be correct, however, to state that they are one and the same. Both our faith and our own core values are changeable and constantly tested by our surroundings and there might be situations where they contradict each other, though the stronger a persons faith is the harder it would be to separate the religious identity from the master identity. This means that the conflict or the denial of identities that becomes an obstacle in the empowerment loop might also lie within the individual herself.

As long as our other identities stays attuned to the moral compass, or in other words, as long as our master identity is consistent with our other identities, we feel secure and confident. When, however, our other identities leads us astray, the master identity will alert us by activating moral emotions like guilt or shame until we either correct our behavior or redefine our master identity (ibid). Here I will give two examples of how the master identity or the religious identity poses problems for the identity as a politician. The first example is from a girl who managed to find consistency between her identity as Christian and as a politician even though her family strongly disapproved of her engagement on religious grounds. When responding a question about how people around her perceived her political commitment she said;

“My family is chocked! [...] My parents are Jehovas Witnesses, so they don’t believe in participating in elections and all that. Even me, like [...] In 2007 I did not participate in the election because of you know, in our religion we don’t believe that we should participate in what... um, they call it worldly politics.”

Amanda 2013-05-06

This woman eventually talked to her parents about being politically committed and managed to convince her family to at least vote in the national election. She realized that some parts of her identity as a Christian, particularly as Jehovas Witness, went against her core values.

“Yeah, we need to [vote]... you know this is our country. We can’t just sit and see that as we support the godly kingdom we live in this world so we are the change that... we want

the change so we must participate in it to make the changes”

Amanda 2013-05-06

It felt wrong when her moral compass indicated that she should not care about worldly politics and thus she altered her religious identity to be consistent with her master identity. She believed that her different identities as both Christian and a politician could be mutually supportive: her Christian identity keeping her on the moral high ground and thus steering her away from corruption.

The quotes above could be compared to one from another interviewee who mentioned the corruption in the political system in his country as one of his major obstacles. Not admitting to a particular faith he talked a lot about his own moral compass during our interview as well as in discussions during breaks and spare time. While responding to a question about what kept him going he started to explain where he thought he was heading.

“You see, someday I'll take that money. I don't want to, not now I mean, but someday I'll be so fed up with this shit system it'll be easier to be a part of it than fight against it. It's not logic.”

David, 2013-04-30

The gap between his own morals and what he saw as the necessary means to use in politics was a recurring theme during our conversations. He told me how he went to vote in the previous election where he, since all the political parties represented the same ideas, had no real way of deciding what or who to vote for. He, a member of the opposition party, decided on the way to the polling station, that he would vote for the party who's candidate was on the first picture he saw. When it turned out to be the current president he ended up voting for the ruling party. Furthermore, he told me that he didn't like the decision he'd made but at least he was true to his principle, he had voted on the first candidate who's picture he saw in the polling station (Field note, 2013-05-02). What he seems worried about is that he is going to shift his identity as a politician according to the corrupt political system, and further away from his master identity instead of the other way around. Saying

that “[i]t's not logic”, he admits that he does not see a valid reason to conform to an identity (as a politician) that he doesn't approve of. However, by setting up and following temporary principles, as he did at the polling station, he can still feel somewhat in control of the this shifting process.

4.1.3. Gender identity

Five of the six female interviewees stated that one of the main obstacles in their political career was related to their gender. It ranged from feeling uncomfortable and incompetent when convention forced them to wear skirts at official gatherings to having to having their identity as a politician openly questioned. The constant separation in speech among the interviewees by using gender prefixes like 'woman MP' or 'female politician' reinforced this questioning of women's identities as politicians. Being given a wrong identity will create a conflict with the master identity and thus also trigger difficult moral emotions. It will also make the interaction rituals even more important since it is through them that the proper identity might be established. One of the interviewees told me that she had trouble confiding in her female friends since being a politician made them look down on her. She got the impression that they believed she were unfaithful to her husband when she attended conferences and that she had made her political career by having sexual relationships with male politicians.

“ they have a perception that every woman in politics or in leadership... um... is, is, I don't want to use the word prostitute but that's the way they look at you.”

Louise 2013-05-06

She also believed voter and colleagues to have less confidence in her abilities as a politician because of her gender and the stereotypical image of women.

“... being a woman some people believe we are so vulnerable... they believe if you are a woman and you are a politician you will not say no to somethings, you'll always say yes, yes, yes to your male counterparts.”

Louise 2013-05-06

Since a person's identity is a matter of who they are and not what they have done, the moral emotion connected to the wrong identity ought to be shame. And since shame is an emotion that makes us want to conform (Turner&Stets 2006:551-553; Scheff 2000:88; Barbalet 2001:86-87, 94), it is often easier to avoid situations where the wrong identity will be made visible. The problem for this woman is that even when she seeks confirmation among her friends she doesn't succeed. Another of the interviewees identified the male participants at the PYPA as well as her male party members as the main obstacle both in her political career and her personal development. She told me that she was part of an unofficial group at PYPA who wanted to form a network for female politicians in order to strengthen each other in facing what she called 'the issue of men', but also to be a platform for their own personal and political development.

"... they are not telling developmental issues, it's rare. Most times they are there to divert your mind, that you are beautiful 'I like your lips...' so that is also a challenge. You get me? That is a really big challenge. They will never talk to you like the way they talk to their fellow men! Outside, they talk about developmental issues, no! No they will not! But they talk to you about other things that are not going to develop you, that are not going to contribute to your dreams. That's one of the biggest challenges I face, yeah."

Tina, 2013-04-30

This example illustrates a common complaint from the female interviewees. When trying to talk politics with their fellow participants they were subtly refused or sometimes ignored. As the quote above shows, being a woman she is not acknowledged as politician and excluded from the interaction ritual she is trying to participate in. However, in order to not be thrown back in the empowerment loop, she needs to get into a successful interaction ritual. Part of her solution, when her identity as a politician is denied, is to change the crowd, turning to a separatist network. The identities you have determines to at least some extent which interaction rituals you can participate in, thus being confined to a certain

identity may exclude you from certain empowerment loops. The problem in this case, as well as in the above case of Louise, is first, that changing the crowd does not suffice to solve the problem. They can't shut out the men since it's basically their arena they want to enter. Secondly, they do not always have the opportunity of changing to another crowd since they can't get their identities confirmed from their friends. They can, however, use another empowerment loop in a separatist forum, to gather the emotional energy needed to stay in the original loop with the men. This is also visible in the next quote which describes difficulties with refusing invitations.

“You brush of some of them but you have to be sensitive in brushing them of because you might brush of someone in a rude way who is going to be, maybe, resourceful to you in the future. I mean like, what I mean by resourceful is, there is a post and they need a woman and that person can easily tell that [...] Cause even this program, it was a [female] friend who just told me. But even if I'd rub shoulders with them [the men] they wouldn't have told me about this program. So you have to be sensitive in pushing them. And you know what? I can do that, I can say that I don't like conversing, but in a very sensitive way and besides, some of them when you do that they even become your enemies or... you have to be very sensitive”.

Tina 2013-04-30

This quote also shows another part of her solution, how women need to confirm the identities of the male participants while at the same time they try to confirm their own. She would like to be, in this context, first and foremost a politician which she tries to confirm by refusing to flirt with the male participants instead of talking politics. However, in order to not turn them into future enemies she still needs to confirm their identities as men, colleagues and politicians by being “*very sensitive.*” Looking at how she describes future career options like “*a post and they need a woman*” also shows that as a politician she confines herself to the female quota, the very manifestation of the identity as a *female* politician, not competing in the same field as the men. Furthermore, even within this quota, the identity of woman can easily be questioned. Looking at the quote below and comparing

it again with the first quote by *Louise* above confirms the female politician as an identity viewed with skepticism.

“The question is are we really filling numbers or are we bringing in people who matters? We should look at quality instead of numbers. Because now you ask 'Are you gender sensitive?' They will tell you 'Yes! We are! Don't you see? Women are sitting there, they are here, they are being represented'. But in times of decision making some of them are... are... because you'll find they maybe came under the pretext of being a gender representative of the females but they're girlfriends of one of the males, so they really represent, that's nice!”

Hanna, 2013-04-30

4.3. Sustainable empowerment outside of PYPA

According to Collins theory, we go into interaction rituals in order to continue the process of refilling our need for emotional energy (Collins 1993:213-215), if we succeed in doing that it makes us prone to engage in similar interaction rituals again. Ultimately, this could lead to a almost constant refilling of emotional energy, especially if we exist in a social context where the kind of interaction rituals we like to participate in are frequent. An intense interaction ritual can also create a sort of afterglow (Collins 1993:221) that will keep the participants boosted for a while even after the ritual has taken place, prolonging the effects of gained emotional energy and thus leaving them feeling extra secure and confident to try out new interaction rituals. In the case of PYPA, the participants will meet under the same circumstances three times during one year. Each occasion is bound to be an intense experience, but there is still a question about how to make the experience last outside of the academies. Although it may be a successful and interesting event, the emotional ruse often and sadly starts to fade the further away in time we move from the actual event. In the case of the PYPA participants, it is imperative, in order to create sustainable empowerment, that they use the afterglow of the academy to gain access to new interaction rituals when they get home, to avoid reversing the empowerment loop.

However, though all my interviewees told me they had learned a lot from the academy (something they all stated in the first part of the interview) nine out of twelve interviewees told me they didn't expect the experience they'd gathered at the PYPA to change the situation in their parties when they got back. Insufficient mentoring structures as well as a dangerous political climate and corruption were mentioned as insurmountable obstacles that the PYPA could not properly address.

“The root cause of the problem is lacking enough leadership, mentor ship. People are not leaders. Somebody gets leadership through a gun, what do you expect them to do? They never went through leadership mentoring.”

Hanna, 2013-04-30

“It's not like in your countries. When you deal with politics of course it's not the same. When you try to criticize the system, of course, the government, when you're in opposition, something can be wrong in your studies. You can be expelled from school, you can be expelled from the universities, the teacher can make you fail.”

Martin 2013-05-07

These two quotes describes contexts in which the actors have low agency. However, the first quote is about the political system that the participant wants to change, while the other quote describes the participant as the main actor with low agency when facing governmental repression. Looking at the first of the two quotes we can see that empowerment also can be an issue of the other. The leaders, her own party-leaders in this case, blocks her entry into the empowerment loop by their own lack of agency. Thus she sees the core of her problem as lying with someone else, not recognizing any agency of her own in this context. As long as the agency stays with the participants, no matter how low the level is, PYPA can still work as an interaction ritual creating a process of empowerment. When the participants deem the agency to lie with someone else, PYPA could be seen as both having failed their mission and not providing any means for sustainable empowerment.

Looking at what PYPAs as an interaction ritual is required to do to make the emotional energy last outside the academies, it would be to produce group symbols and group solidarity. The symbols can be infused with emotional energy for future usage that can be retrieved when the participants come across the symbols outside the academy. Symbols that has been described by the participants in this case is mainly paroles and role models. For example, this phrase was frequently used by the program staff and also repeated by some of my interviewees:

“No one shall convince you that you are a leader for tomorrow, you are a leaders of today.”

Amanda, 2013-05-06

To have a woman MP as a role model was often mentioned by the female participants as a source of confidence and strength. Looking at the quote below it is a kind of, not self-projecting as in the case of confidence, but rather a projection of the role-model back to the past where she becomes a comparable example in order for the participant to then self-project.

“[...] the successful people in this world never started when they were up there. They started small, little, weak.”

Jenny 2013-05-01

As interaction ritual-symbols, role-models last long and might in turn themselves produce symbols that can store emotional energy. Most importantly they serve as confirmation of identities. A woman MP, combining the identities of woman and politician could serve as a counter weight to male participant's denial of their female colleagues identities. Some of the participants had already met their role-models at political conferences and frequently thought about what they had said or done as a way of boosting their own energy and confidence. An obstacle, however, is the negative counter identity of female politicians as prostitutes which even an MP would have to overcome.

5. Conclusions

Using the theoretical framework of the empowerment loop showed that looking from the theoretical point of view, of confidence (Barbalet 2001), interaction rituals (Collins 1993) and identity (Turner and Stets 2006), PYPA could be a veritable well of empowerment by combining confidence, building experiences through networking and education, constantly confirming the participants identities as both youth and politicians and through that admitting them into a series of successful interaction rituals, creating group solidarity and emotional energy and thus more confidence. However, the success of PYPA as an interaction ritual depends on whether the participants are accepted among their peers, basically if they are able to combine and confirm their different identities within the group. Without the proper confirmation they will feel excluded and in worst case drained as they give more to participate in the rituals than they gain. Further, it is one thing to verify identities within the program, to make them valid within PYPA, and another to keep that validity outside the academy's walls. Lastly, to be empowered does not equal being able to break down discriminating structures, even a higher level of agency may result in being confined within the same structures as before. Now, I will return to how empowerment may be manipulated, what can be done, and future issues to look upon to better understand the process of empowerment.

5.1. The crucial issue of consistent and verified identities

Everybody has a need to feel secure and respected. This doesn't come as something new, however, according to the empowerment loop, for those working with empowerment, understandings of the role of identity in the empowerment process and the importance of verifying identities is important. In order to enter the process of empowerment and move from a low level of agency to a higher, the participants of PYPA needs a successful interaction ritual that gives them high levels of emotional energy, have them experience group solidarity and confirms their identities as politicians. PYPA seems to be more than adequate in filling the role of a perfect interaction ritual. However, there are still some

issues to be solved and the interviews shows that the process of getting into an empowerment loop during the academy is not equally easy for all the participants. To verify the identities of politician and youth within the forum of the academy ought not be difficult since all people present agrees, not only on the possibility but on the importance of doing so. However the participants, like all people, have a wider and more complex range of visible or invisible identities that they need to make consistent with their identity as young politicians. It has been made visible that women are often excluded from the interaction rituals that are supposed to be their entry into the loop, likewise, tribal identity can be a setback both at PYPA and in their political careers. Needless to say, any kind of discriminating behavior will make the empowering process much more difficult.

Following the theory of the empowerment loop, if the combination young and politician is valid only as long as 'woman', or a certain tribal identity is not acquired to fit in the mix, at least half of the participants will have trouble increasing their levels of empowerment. It is important then, in order to make all participants able to gain access to the empowerment process, that both the participants and the facilitators recognizes the different identities that a participant of PYPA might struggle with. Further, there are some identities that will not even be visible, for example being openly gay in Uganda at the moment might be putting yourself in danger as the government is considering criminalizing homosexuality. Choosing to hide or repress an identity that might not fit with the crowd is always painful as it is moving away from consistency rather than seeking it, which will trigger emotions that might reverse the empowerment loop. Though, there is still a gap between theory and practice when it comes to discrimination and identity. As long as PYPA have a focus other obstacles become secondary. For example when the focus of the program is youth, discrimination against women or homosexuals or certain tribes will easily be secondary questions. The program might be able to put up safety precautions against such discrimination, like implementing a feminist or inter-sectional perspective, but looking at the stories of especially the female participants, they live the discrimination on site. Some of them uses other interaction rituals to avoid reversing the empowerment loop by

gathering emotional energy from elsewhere. Thus, since they need to invest their emotional energy in other interaction rituals, for example through separatist networks they have lesser funds of emotional energy left for participating in the PYPA, and are therefore not able to benefit from the program on equal terms as their male counterparts.

5.2. Confidence

The role of confidence in the empowerment loop is both to make us enter into interaction rituals and to support our different identities. At the same time confidence is reinforced by successful interaction rituals and verified identities. As have been seen in the interviews, even seemingly disadvantageous identities can be used for boosting confidence. Refusing to accept an identity as negative needs a certain amount of confidence to begin with, which implies that earlier interaction rituals have been successful. However if a person is able to do that he or she will also be able to stay longer in the loop and at the same time serve as a role-model for others. It is also a good example of how transforming an identity discourse can manipulate the process of empowerment even from within. If earlier interaction rituals are not successful as for some of the women participating in PYPA they will at the worst reverse the empowerment loop with negative effects on their level of confidence. Not having enough confidence will prevent them from breaching the social conformity that keeps their identities as politicians separate from those of the men.

5.3. *The world outside and the limits of empowerment*

Looking beyond the PYPA academy, the emotional energy that a participant gathers during the academy can be used to repeat successful interaction rituals in similar situations outside the program, in other words, to continue the empowerment loop. Words and concepts they learn to use, group symbols, they create and group solidarity through networking can be used to gain entrance to even more sophisticated rituals in their political career. However, looking at the conflict some of them described between the political context they have to operate in outside the program and their master identity, there are reasons to ask whether gaining access to another kind of conformity can be considered to

be empowerment. Though somewhat empowered it might just be moving from one structure to another. A problem with the empowerment loop is that it is based on a continuous flow of interaction rituals that are fairly similar, only the level of intensity varies, though they might get more advanced as their participants advances. To enter an empowerment loop, a person first has to be admitted into an interaction ritual which implies accepting to behave according to the social codes of the group. If the person doesn't have sufficient emotional energy to dictate the terms of admittance herself, or change the social codes, she will have to conform to the ritual. Thus the empowerment loop, though empowering, in one way is also a conforming process. It would be possible, though, if once admitted into an interaction ritual, to change it from the inside. For example a well established woman MP might be able to change the general rules of acceptance for other women to join political interaction rituals. However, in order to do that she must herself have rather high levels of emotional energy and confidence and a strong identity within the group. Examples of how to manipulate the loop by changing the interaction ritual from the inside has been illustrated both by the case of creating separatist networks and changing the meaning of belonging to a certain tribe, from something shameful into something to be proud of.

5.4. Future issues

In this paper I have used the case of PYPA in order to try a theoretical model for understanding the process of empowerment. I have shown how the process of empowerment can be conceptualized and how; by using the theoretical model we can detect obstacles in the empowerment process and see how we might overcome them, in other words how the process may be manipulated. My case study only included the first of three academies the participants have to attend during PYPA and, since empowerment is a process, it would be interesting and valuable for the development of the theory to compare the results from this study with the following two academies. A comparison with a long term projects might also show different obstacles and solutions to the empowerment process compared to a study of shorter projects.

Regarding the validity of the empowerment loop after being tested against this specific case, the model used to analyze empowerment points at the connections between individual and social processes; how both identity, confidence and social interaction are connected and plays part in increasing an individual's agency. Following from the model, it may be theoretically deducted that for example role-models are important when it comes to empowerment since they connect to both confidence and identity. The model is, however, tightly connected to the theories within it. For example, building on Barbalet's work on confidence, shame becomes an important emotion since it shuts people out of the loop. In this case, it has been a valid point to look at, but other emotions that limit confidence may very well be relevant. It might, thus, in future research, be possible to swap one theory of confidence into an other that focus on something else than shame and see how this affect the rest of the loop, and the same goes for theories regarding identity. Lastly, since it is a theoretical model, the practicalities, the concrete actions of improving empowerment in a certain case, must be deducted from the empirical material.

Moreover, I believe there is also much to add to this theory concerning theories of identity and coping strategies that might further explain how the empowerment process might be manipulated. Finally, the empowerment loop was tried on a very specific sample that has been deemed dis-empowered in a certain context. Being well educated and politically recognized enough by their party to get nominated to the PYPA my interviewees were already to some extent empowered and committed persons. If the empowerment loop were to be tested against another sample it might show different but interesting results.

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Hanna, 2013-04-30, Tanzania

Jonathan 2013-05-03, Uganda

Martin 2013-05-07, Tanzania