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Apathy or Exclusion? Unfolding Constructions of Citizenship

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MA in Sociology

(Youth, Community & Social Regeneration)

This article unfolds constructions of citizenship by directly examining young people's views and experiences in order to confirm or reject the "Youth Apathy Thesis". Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted and seven overarching themes emerged from a detailed thematic analysis of the interview texts. The themes discussed are The Meaning of Citizenship, Social Change: Shaping the Experience of Citizenship, Young People as Autonomous Global Citizens, Motivating Citizenship, Barriers Facing Young People, Automatic Citizenship is Problematic, Inspire a Generation: Young People Promoting a Culture of Citizenship. The data suggests a rejection of the "Youth Apathy Thesis".

Introduction

Citizenship is a much debated topic, yet researchers argue that "most people are untouched by the animated debate in political and academic circles about the nature of citizenship" (Dean & Melrose 1999, p.105). Discourse on citizenship is largely removed from everyday discussions and consequently the reality of what citizenship means to people has been lost (Kelly 2009). Considering the vast amount of literature on the topic, very little is known about the realities about how different people understand themselves as citizens (Jones and Gaventa 2002, p.28).

Young people in particular are marginalised in terms of their "day to day experiences of economic and social inequality" and research proposes that discourse must change from transforming young people into good citizens, to acknowledging that they are citizens here and now acting in and impacting on our world (World Youth Report 2003, p.305). This research was based on the premise that citizenship must be understood in the context of subjective meaning and this is achieved by exploring young people's experience of citizenship, sense of identity and belonging. Such an approach is advocated by prominent researchers in this field such as Yuval-Davis (2004), Alexander (2006) and Turner (2007). The aim of this study was to describe the various dimensions of citizenship as understood by young people, describe young people's experience of citizenship, examine the status of young people's citizenship and confirm or reject the "youth apathy thesis".

Citizenship: A Contested Concept

While citizenship is discussed worldwide, no universally accepted meaning of the concept exists (Kabeer 2002b; Osler & Starkey 2003). Citizenship is dynamic, multi-layered and intrinsic to people's mode of being. Marshall (1963) proposed a theory of citizenship that comprises three core dimensions, civil, political, and social rights. While acknowledging his contribution, it is clear that modern economic, political and social milieu are very different to Marshalls time (Roche 1992) and that further inquires have led to greater developments about the dynamics of citizenship (e.g. Lister 1998 & 2003 and Turner 2007). The meaning of citizenship has changed over time (Tonon 2012) and Alexander (2001) provides a comprehensive definition based on nine interdependent but distinct dimensions[1].

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[1] These include Membership, Sense of Personal Power, Democratic Values, Political & Human Rights, Civic Involvement & Responsibility, Accountability, Knowledge & Skills, Participation in Democratic Decision Making, and a Constitution

Alexander's (2001) definition is representative of more contemporary views of citizenship which have moved away from the traditional approach based solely on relations between the state and the individual and towards a "society centred approach" (Kabeer 2002) that focuses on involvement and participation in society. Thus, it is argued that citizenship should not only be concerned with collective and universal rights, rather, it must consider culture and address issues of "identity, belonging" (Yuval-Davis 2004, p.215), "gender, ethnicity" and "race", with respect to different groups of people (Turner 2007). Citizenship is embedded in people's way of being; it is influenced by their history, their memories, their social interactions and upbringing. Yuval-Davis (1995, p.5) defines citizenship as "full membership in the community" and Suad (1999 cited in Parrenas 2001, p.1130) claims that, "citizenship defines who you are, where you belong, where you come from and how you understand yourself in the world". Therefore, such an important concept warrants investigation.

This paradigm shift which occurred in the late 20th century marked a change in from "passive" to "active" theories of citizenship (Lister 1998). Active citizenship is defined as

> "*the active exercise of social rights and shared responsibilities associated with belonging to a community or society; the concept is broader than just a formal or legal definition and encompasses social, economic and cultural rights and obligations*". (NESF 2003, p.136)

The primary emphasis here is on social responsibility, engagement and participation in society. Research has demonstrated that active citizens have powerful bonds with their communities; they have a strong sense of responsibility and respect the places and people within their communities (SVP). These feelings are deeply ingrained in values of justice and care. Turner (2001) argued that changes in communications, family configurations, the

labour markets and gender division that permeate modern society constitute a change in our understanding of citizenship. Globalization is also changing how people view themselves and the social change that has occurred has seen the emergence of the global citizen.

Trends in European policy documents concerned with citizenship and young people tend to overemphasise the importance of employment in the context of being a full citizen. This reflects neo-liberal ideology and is evident in Western capitalist societies where high earners have more rights and privileges, than for instance, young people who struggle to reach that stage in their life. Furthermore, Cavalli & Galland (1993) argue that this is problematic for young people, considering the "prolongation of the youth transition" and the inconsistency across cultures regarding the category of youth (Bradley & Van Hoof 2005, p.31).

Youth, State Relations & Policy

The state is the power structure responsible for arranging, controlling and defending the institution of citizenship. Many studies show young people are structurally restricted from social and political participation that is conducive to their citizenship (Johnson 2000). Many argue that citizenship must not only address the legalities of rights but that careful consideration should be given to young people's ability to activate resources to fulfil these claims (see Barbalet 1988; Jones & Wallace 1992). Young people are vulnerable because they are not in a position to contend with the larger institutions to which they have little access. Citizenship is cultivated more effectively by understanding what people believe their role in society to be, and the actions, consequences and feelings they associate with that experience. In an attempt to achieve this, the Krakow Declaration (2002) has been instrumental in promoting youth participation cross-culturally, nationally and locally. In this declaration it was reiterated that

young people are citizens and must have "access to all forms of participation in society" (Krakow 2002). It is a comprehensive review that considers youth in relation to a whole range of issues such as leisure; sports, employment, business, geography, housing, environment, mobility, public and private services, education, health, technology and the family to name but a few. As a result a wide variety of activities on a local and regional level have been carried out across Europe to uphold the intentions of the charter. This is a positive step forward in recognising the complexities that young people face in terms of their citizenship.

Apathy or Exclusion?

In the context of citizenship, young people can appear apathetic towards political and social participation because they cannot identify with a society that views them as problematic. Society pressurises young people to aspire to the notion of an ideal active citizen, an ideal which for most is unattainable (Bradley and Van Hoof 2005). Recent studies are challenging the "youth apathy thesis" by confirming that young people are engaged and actively involved in unconventional forms of political participation. Research demonstrates that young people are not apathetic rather they are alienated from social and political activity (Kirbis 2010). This research challenges the hegemonic discourse that attributes a lack of participation to young people's apathy or lack of interest in social and political issues. This mode of thought highlights the structural problems that exist and the reluctance of those in power to exert any real change (Campbell 2005).

Theorising Identity

Identity is based on social interactions which themselves are dynamic and infinite throughout a lifetime. It is a recognised social position that involves internal subjective and external processes (Woodward 2004) and is a reference

to the individual self, yet it also denotes a relational aspect much like the concept of citizenship. For Bauman (2000, p.62) living in conditions of infinite choice (liquid modernity) offers people the "freedom to become anybody". Yet, he argues that a problem lies with the never ending "becoming", this state of "unfinishedness" and "incompleteness", which fuels the tension and anxiety experienced in a society characterized by risk. Under these conditions Bauman (2000, p.171) highlights the frailty of human bonds and argues that in the endless pursuit of self-actualization, we weaken the social bonds that were once the foundation of this process.

Similarly, Becks (1992, p.49) analysis of contemporary society concludes that society is characterised by risk and this is underpinned by a mental shift from "the solidarity of need to solidarity motivated by anxiety". For Beck and Beck Gernsheim (1995) the process of "individualization" is a core feature of the "risk society" whereby the individual is expected to pursue a life beyond the constraints of social bonds, a life that is original and self reliant. Beck's (1992) understanding of the "risk society" is useful as it highlights features of modern social life as unpredictable and illusive and this has provided insights into inherent fears and anxieties that exist about the modern way of life. The theory is particularly relevant to young people, considering they are often referred to as "at risk" because of the vulnerable position they hold within this social context. Such accounts of identity and modernity are useful for demonstrating significant shifts that have occurred in contemporary constructions of youth identities. Identity is a useful heuristic device as discourse about the self, who we are, how we live, how we interact and relate to each other reveals much about how human society operates.

Methodology

A qualitative methodology was adopted as it can provide contextually rich data, and its flexibility enabled me to access the subjective constructions of young people's citizenship. This was achieved by exploring behaviours, beliefs and the relationships young people have that contribute to their constructions of citizenship. The assumptions of qualitative inquiry are that research takes place in the natural world; it uses interactive and humanistic methods that allow for information to be accessed from the data (Marshall & Rossman 1999, p.3). Reality in this context is socially constructed and fluid and is established within the confines of culture, society and relationships. This research is based on the phenomenological perspective of *verstehen* which is about describing and presenting the views of the participants. *Verstehen* differs from positivist methods of enquiry in the sense that it employs "empathetic understanding" as a tool to access information and acquire knowledge (Mazman, 2005).

Purposive sampling (Richie *et al* 2003) was utilised and participants were accessed through formal networks because this approach allowed access to a concentration of potential participants who are engaged with specific services relevant to the topic of investigation (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2011, pp. 96-106). The final sample consisted of 3 males and 5 females aged between 18 and 25 years, who volunteer on a weekly basis with a non-profit organisation that advocates on behalf of young people.

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were chosen as the method of data collection for this research. A citizenship framework was used to develop the interview guide and questions were based on 3 dimensions of citizenship, i.e. civic, political and social dimensions. Open-ended questions were used to encourage responses that were, significant, unforeseen, non-directed, rich and descriptive in nature (Lofland & Lofland 1995).

The framework for analysis was set out by Braun & Clarke (2006) and provided a very clear and systematic approach to conducting thematic analysis.

Table 1: Stages of Thematic Analysis (from Braun & Clarke 2006)

Stage	Description of Process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing data, reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic map" of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature.

Throughout the research process careful consideration was given to ethical issues such as confidentiality, anonymity, data storage, volunteerism and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Ethical approval was received for this study.

Findings

The Meaning of Citizenship

"The meaning of citizenship" is a higher order theme that presents the ideas associated with understanding the connotations of citizenship. For the young people who participated in this research, citizenship is both active and passive and it is essentially based on human rights, which are a set of international norms that protect citizens against legal, political and social exploitation, involving equal citizenship, non-discrimination, protection, freedom and participation (Nickel 2010). For the interviewees the notion of identification or identity was deeply rooted in citizenship which comprises of 5 related components. Firstly, the dominant theme evident was "belonging and acceptance". Belonging & Acceptance was *the key* feature of citizenship for the interviewees and is defined as an on-going process that involves membership of various groups throughout a lifetime. It is about positioning oneself within society, it is a central feature of being human and many theorists recognise it as a basic human need (Pitonyak 2010). It is also underpinned by tolerance of diversity (Anderson & Taylor 2008). This is illustrated by one respondent, Holly, who stated:

> "*You would feel like you had no self-belief in yourself and you wouldn't believe in your citizenship. People need to be made feel like they are part of something to care for it. Like if they don't feel like they are part of it then why would they hang around, give their time, have a say or vote*".

The need to be accepted is part of ensuring a sense of belonging. Furthermore the interviewees spoke about the consequences of not belonging and being

accepted and raised concerns about social withdrawal and poor self-esteem. All interviewees acknowledged the impact it has on their daily existence. Citizenship was important because it helped them to understand

> "*...who you are and yah citizenship will come into that…it's a huge deal to be a citizen of a country, I suppose like if you're not comfortable then you're not enjoying your life, like you do have to feel like you belong, no one wants to be an outcast*". (Fiona)

Secondly, there was a strong emphasis placed on the ideas of "participation and contribution" to society. Social participation necessitates their recognition as full and equal citizens. The interviewees spoke about the importance of this in the context of promoting the conditions to enable participation in social developments. This involved notions of control and power and in terms of contribution they spoke about social accountability, which they believed should resonate with the individual, society and the state in order to ensure that all concerned are responsive to each other's needs. Examples of this are presented below:

> "*Citizenship is about your involvement in the community; if everyone gets involved we can do good for our country, like for our society*" (Amy)

> "*I mean if you don't have your say you're not contributing anything but noise*" (Emma)

Thirdly, the interviewees believed citizens were "entitled" to certain protective benefit such as social welfare, education and medical grants. These "entitlements" were conditional on positive contribution to society. The interviewees spoke about adhering to social norms such as paying taxes and observing the law. This is illustrated by the excerpt below:

> "*there are expectations in the sense that you have to pay taxes and live up to well I suppose when you're a citizen you have to follow the law, like if you are a citizen of a*

> *country you should be contributing and not just taking*".
> (Emma)

All the interviewees felt that society was worth investing in and acknowledged that those who invest in their people, their economies and their communities have earned the right to certain benefits and to be protected. For the interviewees this idea of entitlements was not bound by money or class, it was in essence influenced by ethics and morals.

Fourthly, there was a general consensus among the interviewees that young people must be involved and consulted in the processes of decision making regarding social and political matters. This sub-theme is about including young people in the process of decision making, particularly in relation to issues affecting them or issues of interest to them. My respondents felt strongly that it was important to "have a voice" in these matters

Lastly, citizenship was about ensuring that people live in an inclusive society and that all people have equal access to resources. This view is centred on equal freedoms and opportunities. This was recognised as a "work in progress" (Dan) yet respondents felt that ensuring "inclusion and access" for all within society should be the central aim of promoting citizenship.

Social Change: Shaping the Experience of Citizenship

Changes to the family structure were identified in numerous cases as having a profound impact on citizenship. This is in reference to the political aspect and highlighted significant trends which have been raised in public media, for example, the low number of young voters (www.cso.ie). The interviewees recognised they were in a transitional period whereby traditional influences on political activity are no longer as powerful and prevalent as they were for

previous generations. Yet, it is important to note that for many of the interviewees this was an exciting time when young people were "pushing boundaries" (Colm).

Local communities were once a foundation for the development of one's identity. Yet in the context of an increasingly changing global environment young people are looking to wider society as their external frame of reference, as illustrated by the following excerpts:

> "*I don't feel like I have close enough ties to my community that I couldn't leave*". (Dan)

> "*there are stigmas, there are issues that you don't have on the wider side maybe you don't know your neighbours…and that's a factor but, you have much, well larger populations seem to be much less concerned with the specifics of what you do, what you are… Well what's important for me is the city is more open, it's more free, so to speak…*" (Colm)

The local community is no longer stable or familiar. The history and bonds associated with local communities is lessening. Globalisation has impacted on the decline of such areas and young people are drawn to the wider global society, to an environment that meets their needs. Traditions have become "commercialised folklore" (Preuss 2003, p.16) and globalisation itself is a concept that is built on the assumptions of freedom. This theme echoes how young people define citizenship in the context of acceptance and belonging.

Motivating Citizenship

Motivating citizenship is a deductive theme that was used to identify specific motivations for citizenship from the perspective of young people. A motive is defined as any cause, reason or incentive for encouraging active citizenship. There are four subthemes identified that are the primary motivations for becoming actively involved in citizenship. They are injustice, concerns for

future generations, moral responsibility and contentment. The interviewee's felt that where injustice was happening they would feel motivated to involve themselves in active citizenship.

> "*Maybe something happened that went against someone like you know another citizen and we all had to stand up for them*". (Emma)

Amy spoke about her worries for future generations and how this motivated her to actively campaign and protest against the rise of student fees and reduction of educational grants. She said

> "*I knew that even if it was cut 10% there would be no way I would be back in college. You know it's gona be coming in gradually. They took 5% this year and they will take 5% next year and eventually it's going to be obliterated it's not going to be there so I was thinking what's going to happen when my niece is going to college or my cousins are in college, none of them will be able to go you know*".

She was distressed by this and felt she had to express her concerns. Some interviewees' spoke about moral responsibility which is demonstrated when moral individuals reflect on their situation and form codes of conduct out of respect for others. An example of this is seen in the data when Grainne discusses her motivation for active citizenship.

> "*Well it's about giving something back. You have the right to do things and have access to things and some people don't so it is good to give something back in that way*". (Grainne)

Barriers Facing Young People in Relation to Citizenship

The interviewees identified specific barriers in relation to their citizenship. Some of the interviewees spoke about feeling a social pressure to "conform" to widely accepted views. The interviewees described this as follows:

> "*Like it is a big issue when people don't agree with the general opinion, you wouldn't be welcome*". (Holly)

"It's like social pressure and if you go against the common belief, like where I work it is very opinionated on one side, it's very difficult". (Colm)

We're not listened to

All the interviewees believed that citizens have rights, entitlements and obligations yet they acknowledged having such rights, entitlements and obligations does not necessarily equate to equality for all within society. All the interviewees felt their ranking in the social order was less than adequate. This is illustrated by Amy when she states that:

"You defiantly feel that like, you're made to feel when you're young, sure Shush, what do you know? You do feel like whatever you think and say doesn't matter".

This is reiterated by Grainne who also comments that:

"It's difficult, am feeling that you don't have or what you say doesn't matter"

The interviewees felt a lack of recognition is a significant barrier to them in relation to their own citizenship.

Political Distrust

Most of the interviewees felt they could not trust or rely on politicians or the government. This relationship, which is significant to the nature of their citizenship, is clearly fractured. This distrust is underpinned by class and status distinctions, and is influenced by the media and the focus of political leaders on negative stereotypes of young people. This is further compounded by a sense of detachment and disillusionment from politics in general and there is confusion centred on political social structures and political language. For instance Sean says:

"Like I know there are all these referendums going on but I don't know what they are all about. It's defiantly not clear

because there is all this jargon behind it. There is huge long sentences and by the time you read it you have lost interest"

"I don't care what they say anymore ...there is stuff going on but I can't connect with it so I just change the channel"
(Dan)

A Displaced Generation

Forced emigration was a significant subtheme for the interviewees. Most of them spoke about the inevitability of leaving Ireland and some interviewees were in the planning stages of emigrating. The impact this has on young people's citizenship is illustrated by Holly who feels that

"it's kinda sad when, like I thought I would get to be growing up longer in Ireland but by the looks of it I will have to go somewhere else. It's kinda sad like if you go to a different culture, you lose your Irishness, like you won't be involved as much in what's going on at home, like voting, so if you're out in Australia you're not going to vote on what happens in Ireland even if you have a say or an opinion and knew who you wanted to vote for, like your all the way out in Australia because you can't get a job so it's bad in that way".

Automatic Citizenship is Problematic

A general perception throughout this research was that automatic citizenship is problematic. Automatic citizenship is defined as citizenship derived from birth right. Interviewees believed that when citizenship is automatically given by birth right there is no emphasis to promote, teach or participate in citizenship activities. The interviewees spoke about the consequences of this for example:

"It is automatic, it is a given so a lot of us don't understand it really, which is not good" (Dan)

Emma also illustrates how automatic citizenship can be problematic. She said:

"Like here in Ireland I am a citizen but I don't think about it. Yah you don't think about it until you're asked. I suppose in school we did CSPE but that's more kind of learning about

the government it's not really about your rights I suppose. I don't think we ever did anything about citizenship, like we learned about the importance of other countries but at home like we were never asked you're a citizen of Ireland what do you expect? What should you do?"

Automatic citizenship does not equate to automatically understanding fully your roles and responsibilities as a citizen. Therefore the interviewees recognised this as a significant challenge that they face.

Citizenship Ambiguity

This theme was consistent throughout the interviews. Citizenship Ambiguity refers to citizenship that is understood in more than one way and it is not clear which meaning is intended. The young people in this study felt undecided or had vague ideas about what their own citizenship means. Many of the interviewees spoke about the difficulties this can present. For example the following quote evidences Fiona's understanding of the consequences of automatic citizenship and highlights a fundamental flaw with the general lack of awareness and ambiguity about citizenship.

"it's like they (young people) are not informed, like your told you're a citizen of Ireland but they don't explain what it is, I suppose you … could grow up not feeling part of it. I didn't have that drive like you know oh yah I'm going to vote or be actively involved. So yah not being informed or not feeling like you had a say…that would defiantly be detrimental and probably result in people not bothering"

Finally, the interviewees spoke about the need to inspire young people and encourage active involvement at an early age. This extends to everyone in society and they spoke about this on and individual level (role models), a structural level (education) and a global level (Social media)

Discussion

Consistent with other research, young people in my study believed citizenship to constitute elements of belonging & acceptance, participation & contribution, decision making & consultation, access and inclusion, and entitlements (Alexander 2006). Young people's ideas of citizenship were heavily underpinned by identity; therefore citizenship for young people is about understanding their role in society. It is grounded in moral and ethical values and a sense of caring for others that share their environment. Young people's formal (education) experience of citizenship was limited and the evidence from the interviews suggests citizenship for young people is underdeveloped and underestimated. Participants discussed their struggles with status and identity in a continuously changing globalized world. Many felt that they were less than full citizens. All the participants expressed a strong desire to further cement their citizenship and this highlights a need for investments in promoting citizenship and ensuring the future of society is inclusive. The young people in this study often felt demoralised, unimportant and judged in society, yet what is clear from my findings is that young people are resilient and will adapt and re-create themselves in the context of rapid social and economic changes.

Concerns about the status of young people's citizenship have been expressed by social policy makers, politicians, social organisations, parents, and the public (Biesta, Lawy & Kelly 2009). It was clear in this research that despite evidence to suggest that the participants were active in society, many did not recognise or refer to themselves as active citizens. Confusion surrounds many aspects of citizenship and for all the young people in this research this experience was the first time in their lives they were asked what their citizenship meant to them. As previously mentioned identities are formed through relationships, experiences and the environment, therefore citizenship must extend to these dimensions to encourage the development of strong social bonds.

Politics was identified as a significant aspect of citizenship and yet young people felt disconnected from politics in general and failed to see themselves in any way as being political. This was in contrast to their experiences of voting, advocacy and protesting. This highlighted a concern raised earlier in the study that most people are removed from formal political debates, yet this is not to say they are not politically active in different ways (Dean & Melrose 1999). This was identified as a significant "barrier facing young people in relation to citizenship". Such findings suggest that young people are excluded from fully participating in society.

Based on the analysis of the research findings this study rejects the "youth apathy thesis". It is argued that the voice of young people is often lost in policy and consultation practices. This assertion supports previous studies that demonstrate the extent to which young people are disconnected from participation and decision making processes (World Youth Report 2003). This understanding attributes to popular assumptions that young people are apathetic towards social civic and political participation. Research has emphasised the economic and social consequences of youth apathy therefore, a conscious social effort to challenge this must be on the agenda for promoting a culture of citizenship.

Conclusions & Recommendations

My findings demonstrate that there is no single model of what citizenship is and no unified process for developing citizenship. Young people do not set out to learn to be active citizens, rather, these attributes develop from the motivations that they have to be morally and ethically good citizens. Identity rather than nationality is central to young people's constructions of citizenship and this has implications for how citizenship education should be developed in schools. Young people have a range of transferable skills that are conducive to active

citizenship, for example, they demonstrate moral responsibility and adaptability. Young people are enthusiastic and keen to promote a culture of citizenship. Therefore, more emphasis needs to be placed on lifelong learning and the sustainability of citizenship activity. Furthermore, there is also a need to re-think citizenship education and include avenues for informal learning. It is imperative that critical and creative ways of thinking about citizenship and politics in particular need to be promoted among young people. Consequently an opportunity presents itself in terms of fostering citizenship from a youth perspective and developing programs that consult young people and involve them in decision making.

I have argued that young people are vulnerable to social exclusion and are less likely to have the opportunities to sustain active citizenship. I also conclude that treating young people as problematic is, in itself, problematic. Accordingly, research on issues concerning young people should include their direct views and experiences. The research findings show that citizenship is embedded in people's lives, it is historical and active. It is clear that young people have conflicting feelings about social changes. For example, decreased links to local communities encourage young people to seek different types of connections in wider society, yet they also express a desire to hold onto the links that connect them to their culture. The issue of forced emigration, which has left some young people feeling displaced, has implications for future generations of Irish people who may only consider themselves Irish through ancestry. It is suggested that future research focus on the influence of the family, friends and extracurricular groups on learning citizenship as this extremely limited in citizenship literature.

Young people identified the need for structural developments which give them a voice and an active role in determining their own future. Governments and organisations need to work more towards creating opportunities for young

people to develop their skills and contribute in creative ways to society. Further research is needed in the area of informal citizenship learning and an interesting area for development is that of the role of media and social network sites in active citizenship.

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