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***‘Queering Irish Nationalism’
How the Irish Marriage Equality Referendum 2015 marked
a reshaping of Irish national identity***

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
List of Abbreviations and Phrases.....	4
Introduction	5
Literature Review	7
Nationalism.....	8
Sexual Citizenship	9
Queer Theory	11
Queer Nationalism.....	12
Conclusion	15
Methodology.....	16
Research Methods – Qualitative Research.....	17
Focus Group Strengths and Limitations	18
Sample Participants.....	19
‘Insider status’ and Potential Biases	21
Ethical Considerations.....	22
Conclusion	23
Research Findings	24
Understanding of Irish Nationalism.....	25
Nationalism as a ‘Yes Equality’ campaign tactic.....	28
Effects of Marriage Equality on Irish Nationalism	32
Personal Connection to Irish Identity	34
Personal Connection to Queer Identity	37
Conclusion	39
Conclusion.....	40
Research Questions.....	40
Importance and future areas of study	41
Limitations	42
Conclusion	42
Bibliography.....	44

Abstract

This research project involves questioning if and how Irish nationalism was reshaped during the Irish Marriage Equality campaign and referendum, 2015. The goal is to identify how national identity was used by campaigners and whether this has had a lasting impact on how Irish people consider what it means to be Irish. This has been done by conducting focus groups from various age demographics and sexual orientations to see how each group reflects on the connection between Marriage Equality and nationalism. Upon conducting these focus groups, it becomes clear that there is a divide with regard to the opinion of the depth and lasting effect of any change experienced. Through showing the first hand accounts of a number of 'Yes' voters, this research highlights the strengths and weaknesses of using nationalism as a campaign tactic, and subsequently the connection that specific groups have to their own sense of Irishness; before, during and after the monumental referendum.

List of Abbreviations and Phrases

- 1- LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer.
- 2- Queer – “Queer” will be used under Karl Whittington’s definition as an umbrella term for all minority sexual orientations and gender identities that are not cisgender or heterosexual.
- 3- ‘100 Days Campaign’ – A period of time used by Yes Equality to describe the 100 days prior to the referendum on Marriage Equality, on May 22nd 2015, in which the ‘Yes Equality’ campaign were most active.
- 4- Yes Equality: A group which describes itself as a campaign organisation for a Yes vote to Marriage Equality, formed by a coalition of the ICCL (Irish Council for Civil Liberties), GLEN (Gay and Lesbian Equality Network) and Marriage Equality.
- 5- Marriage Equality Referendum: A referendum held in Ireland on May 22nd 2015 to add the following words into the Irish constitution, as the thirty-fourth amendment to Bunreacht na h-Eireann:

“Marriage may be contracted in accordance with law by two persons without distinction as to their sex.”

Introduction

“This referendum was all about belonging – Irish lesbian and gay citizens had to ask the Irish people if they too can belong to Ireland and belong in Ireland. In their deep generosity the Irish people have said “Yes” – Yes, we belong”

– Grainne Healy, 23rd of May 2015.

Nationalism is defined as being about belonging. It is expressed as a unity and identity for a population. (Smith, 2001) Sexual citizenship, similarly, is about belonging. It is epitomized by having equal rights to all other citizens of a particular nation in terms of expressing, practicing and recognizing sexuality. Despite their obvious connection, there is a significant gap in the knowledge of political academia with regard to the connection between the above two concepts; nationalism and sexual citizenship. The purpose of this research project is to attempt to begin to fill this gap.

On May 23rd 2015, Ireland became the first nation in the world to pass same-sex marriage by popular vote and subsequently protect the marital rights of LGBTQ citizens in the constitution of the nation; Bunreacht na hEireann. This vote marked a turn in tide for a traditionally known, conservative nation with close ties to the Roman Catholic church. The significance of the outcome of this vote is currently under-researched, potentially due to its recentness and uniqueness on the world stage.

This year, 2016, marks the centenary anniversary of the 1916 Rising; a historical revolution noted as a great leap in Irish nationalism. With this commemorative year following so closely after such a monumental change in Irish conservativeness via Marriage Equality, it is the ideal time to evaluate how Irish nationalism has evolved over the past hundred years, with Marriage Equality epitomizing this change.

The main research question posed here is how the Marriage Equality referendum marked a reshaping in Irish national identity. This broad question is divided into the following sub-questions in order to gain the most insight into the connection between sexual citizenship and nationalism:

- 1- How did 'Yes Equality' use Irish nationalism as a tactic to achieve a vote in favor of Marriage Equality during their '100 Days of Campaigning'?
- 2- Has Irish nationalism been redefined in the eyes of Irish citizens as a result of the passing of same-sex marriage?
- 3- Does the current interpretation of Irish nationalism better reflect the values of 'Yes' voters in the Marriage Equality referendum?
- 4- How has the concept of Queer Nationalism been affected following the campaign for and passing of same-sex marriage in Ireland?

The structure of this research paper is as follows.

The Literature Review will discuss the current research under the following five headings; Nationalism, Sexual Citizenship, Queer Theory, Queer Nationalism and Popular Readership. The purpose of this is to identify the separate spheres of academia which will be combined in this research project to fill the current gap in knowledge in relation to the connection between sexual citizenship rights and Irish nationalism.

The Methodology chapter will identify the reasoning for the research methods employed, namely qualitative research in the form of three focus groups with variables of age demographics and sexuality. The formation of the focus groups and the purpose for the choice in participants will also be discussed in this chapter.

The Research Findings chapter will summarize the discussions in each of the focus groups and compare the participants' answers based on the variables of age and sexual orientation. The Findings chapter has five subsections, divided based on areas of conversation which the focus groups were led to discuss. The purpose of dividing the findings as stated above is to analyze the focus group conversations to the best possible quality in order to reach the aim of this research project in answering the originally proposed questions.

The research findings will be followed by a concluding chapter summarizing the knowledge gained through field research and examinations of current relevant literature available in order to reach a conclusion on each of the research questions posed.

Literature Review

This purpose of this chapter is to be a critical eye on the current literature available on sexual citizenship and nationalism. From initial studying of these fields, it is evident that there is a lack of overlap between the two in current literature. While this is understandable in Ireland with the passing of same-sex marriage having occurred less than a year ago, the lack of studies on the connection between the two here mirrors a global trend. As same-sex marriage and nationalism as a combined topic is so under researched, I have had to divide it into a number of separate sections. This chapter will be a comprehensive and critical review of the current literature available in relation to same-sex marriage and its place in national identity through the following approaches:

- Nationalism
- Sexual Citizenship
- Queer Theory
- Queer Nationalism
- Popular Readership

Nationalism

Nationalism is described by Anthony Smith as “An ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’” (2001). It is about a sense of solidarity and community with those who share your territory, history or culture.

From a political or sociological viewpoint, there are two main perspectives on the origins and basis of nationalism. One is the primordialist perspective that describes nationalism as a reflection of the ancient and perceived evolutionary tendency of humans to organize into distinct groupings based on an affinity of birth. This group believes nationalism is timeless and essential to human nature. The other is the modernist perspective that describes nationalism as a recent phenomenon that requires the structural conditions of modern society in order to exist. Modernism sees the nation as invented, constructed, or in Benedict Anderson’s memorable phrase, as an ‘imagined political community’ (1991). A second supporter of the modernist approach is Elie Kedourie who argued that nationalism ‘was a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century’ (1960:1)

For the purpose of this research project, I will be working under the modernist approach to nationalism, considering it as an ‘imagined’ community which can be manipulated, reshaped and altered in order to include more people in the sense of solidarity and community that nationalism brings.

Nagel, however, questions Anderson’s approach to the ‘imagined’ community and begs the questioning; who does the imagining? In her critique, she describes the nation as a masculine creation which is best identified with “a white, male, heterosexual notion of masculine identity loaded with all the burdens and privileges that go along with hegemonic masculinity”. This critique is important for my research project as it is suggesting the Irish re-imagined their nationalism in a less heteronormative light.

Sexual Citizenship

Nationalism is often intrinsically linked with citizenship, as most nations are based on specific territories to which their citizens have legal rights and responsibilities. The question which arises in this research project is specifically to do with a subsection of citizenship known as 'Sexual Citizenship.' The key researchers on this concept are Richardson (2000/2012), Weeks (2001), Kitchin & Lysaght (2004), Warner and Ryan (2014). Most of the work on this concept has been completed in the last decade and a half, as the phrase first came in to academic understanding in 1998. The concept itself is not new, and brings into light arguments on contraception, abortion, homosexuality and many more. However, there is an obvious focus in the work by the above researchers into the concept of Same-Sex Marriage in relation to Sexual Citizenship, considering it a core entitlement for full citizenship.

Richardson defines citizenship as "a set of civil, political and social rights, as well as common membership of a shared community" (2000:107). It is a combination of a feeling of belonging and the legal rights to enforce that feeling. As Kitchin and Lysaght suggest, the definition of citizenship has expanded and what was once a concept merely about a Rousseau style social contract of rights and responsibilities has been reconceived to include recognition and respect (2004:83). Sexual citizenship is a subsection of this umbrella term of citizenship, coined by Jeffrey Weeks. Weeks described the Sexual Citizen as a "hybrid being" between the private and public realms, where our intimate lives are joined with our public need for rights and recognition (1998:35). Richardson places the development of sexual citizenship down to the move from sexual practices to sexual identity in the 1970's and 1980's (2000:116). Our developed self-awareness whereby sexuality moves from being a part of our behaviors into an integral part of who we are meant there was a new-found desire for recognition of sexual identities, and thus sexual citizenship was born.

Sexual Citizenship has been divided by Richardson into three branches; practice, identity and relationship recognition. These are considered to be the hurdles in need of crossing in order to be a full and equal sexual citizen. The issue with this concept of a checklist is that it suggests that once these are achieved, as they have been in the Irish case, there is no more work to be done. This research intends to prove that this concept is limited and does not fully

incorporate the full feeling of acceptance alongside the legal rights which, while not mutually exclusive to one another, culminate to true 'belonging' to a nation.

The authors discussed in this section have described the importance of sexual citizenship in both the feeling and the legality of belonging. However, one weaknesses of their approach is that they fail to connect this to the concept of nationalism. Nationalism as an "imagined identity" is, in its core, related to a feeling of belonging and yet researchers on sexual citizenship fail to make the connection between legal belonging (citizenship) and imagined belonging (nationalism). This research project will attempt to fill this gap in knowledge.

A further weakness in the research on sexual citizenship is the tight theoretical framework which Richardson in particular works under; central-left feminism. She assumes that growing sexual citizenship is a positive to both the individual and society, whereas more conservative viewpoints will argue against this. Furthermore, it does not take into account more radical feminist and queer theory opinions of this form of sexual citizenship as merely including sexual outsiders in current legal rights rather than reshaping our understanding of the sexual being.

Queer Theory

Much of the above work on sexual citizenship is working off the assumption that the granting of equal rights to sexual minorities is a positive move in a nation's modernisation. However, there are a number of scholars and researchers in the sociological and political fields, and beyond, who disagree with this assumption, particularly Weeks (2001) and Lauetis (1991). This section will review the key voices of this debate under the approaches of Feminism and Queer Politics, a term coined by Teresa de Lauetis's 'Queer theory: Lesbian and gay sexualities' (1991). It can be debated under Queer Politics and Feminist critiques that this move to sexual insiders was not a positive step towards sexual citizenship, but rather a complete move into an outdated system which does not necessarily fit the values and experiences of a queer community.

In their study, "Same-Sex Intimacies," Weeks et al bring forth the argument that the "lesbian and gay movement, as well as queer politics, claims inclusion, acceptance of diversity and a recognition and respect for alternative ways of being" (2001). In some arguments, Marriage Equality dismisses 'alternative ways of being.' It includes the lesbian and gay community in an already established institution which, to many feminist critiques, does not leave way for alternative lifestyle recognition beyond essentialist views of patriarchal standards or monogamous relationships. Auchmuty argues that "the radical feminist critique of the institution of marriage is now often seen as obsolete" (2004:116) to those who have become content by the extension of heteronormative institutions to non-hetero people, rather than continuing the line of decades of radical queer politics for the disestablishment of patriarchal norms.

While the argument that same-sex marriage is not a step forward for the Queer community is present in academia, there is a gap in the research in relation to first-hand accounts of any negative experiences by the Queer community in this situation. The research is theoretical in nature, but there is a significant lack of fieldwork bringing this question into light. This research project intends to amend this through the focus groups conducted.

Queer Nationalism

When speaking about the intersection between sexual citizenship and nationalism, it must be noted that the queer subculture could debatably be described as a form of nationalism in itself. It is a diasporas identity and one which has strong arguments for fulfilling the criteria needed to form a nation.

As Walker explains, “gay nationalism is a textbook case for nascent nationalism.” (2001:8) The stages of development in the queer community are inline with the steps that can be followed in many other nationalist movements. It began as a social movement brought together by shared discrimination and, as a result, began to develop a sense of self, belonging and identity within a group. The queer movement effectively claims to have its own culture; with a shared history, recognized flag, international festivals such as Pride Parades and LGBT History month, separate art outlets such as queer films, theatres and literature, and LGBT-specific institutions such as bars, press publications, activist groups, community groups, college societies and NGO’s. This culminates into an alternative public sphere for the queer community which has allowed for the creation of a sense of a distinct ‘gay peoplehood.’(ibid:9)

The importance of this ‘Queer Nation,’ whether or not it is ever legally recognized, is that it gives a minority community protection and support among those who can understand their struggles on an empathetic rather than sympathetic level (ibid). This sense of ‘queerness’ has been forced upon the community by generations of discrimination and stigmatization which had left them with both the social feeling and the second-class legal rights of being separate and different from the heterosexual majority. Following the tendency of many minority groups, the Queer community had no option but to turn this isolation from the majority into a positive sense of inclusion in their own subculture – eventually causing the emergence of the concept of Queer nationalism.

The fear for Queer nationalists is that by being accepted into the heterosexual system, culture and institutions, they will lose their own sense of self associated with their queerness. By becoming another cog in the patriarchal, binary machine of the institution of marriage, they will be forced to resign the sub-culture which has grown stronger to many than the nation they territorially, religiously or ethnically belong to. Becoming part of the mainstream is seen as a negative for those who have fought to create their own nation when the mainstream ones in place denied them access.

Popular Readership

Considering the popular readership and media publications during the '100 Days of Campaigning' for same-sex marriage, it is evident that a number of journalists, in particular Una Mullally of the Irish Times and Ursula Halligan of TV3 considered the interlink between a Yes vote to Marriage Equality and its relationship to Irish Nationalism.

In an Irish Times article, Una Mullally's states "There has been a lot of talk about how this referendum relates to the aspirations we have as a republic, and how a Yes vote will in many ways complete a journey set out in the 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic" (May 18th, 2015). She correlates a yes vote to Marriage Equality with a document published in the 1803 rebellion which declares 'Give up your private resentments, and show to the world that the Irish are not only a brave, but also a generous and forgiving people.'" (ibid) Mullally then poses the question to her readers: "Are we brave? Are we generous? Are we forgiving?" (ibid) This is the ideal example of the tactics of the Yes side in using Irish nationalism to encourage a vote in favour of Marriage Equality. It is drawing on Irish values and history in an attempt to motivate the Irish people to vote Yes.

Ursula Halligan followed in suit and pulled on the values of the Irish people in calling for a Yes: "As a person of faith and a Catholic, I believe a Yes vote is the most Christian thing to do. I believe the glory of God is the human being fully alive and that this includes people who are gay." (May 15th, 2015) As a nation known for its Catholicism, the Yes Campaign appears to have understood that embracing this rather than revolting against this was a key to success.

It must be noted that popular readership, whether that be through Irish Times articles or books prior to and following the referendum such as Healy's "Ireland Says Yes" are certainly one sided. That was the purpose of these publications; to push the Yes vote mainly through emotive means. Their focus is on personal stories and activating a nation through emotion, rather than through sociological theory or legal examples. Therefore, while popular readership may explore the connection between sexual citizenship and nationalism, there is a gap in regards to academic research in this area.

Conclusion

From my study of the literature under the above headings, it is clear that there is a distinct lack of research into the connection between Marriage Equality and nationalism, though popular readership such as the Irish Times articles discussed above suggest that the two are interlinked and, certainly, were used as an interlinked force to win the referendum. Considering the first year in commemorating the success of the Marriage Equality referendum in Ireland coincides with the Centenary celebrations of the 1916 Rising, it is the ideal moment in time to understand how our national history and sense of nationalism in the Irish people was used as a mechanism to drive the Yes vote and, simultaneously, to see how this Yes vote has affected the LGBTQ community's personal nationalism.

Methodology

The purpose of this research project is to explore the re-shaping of Irish national identity to include the LGBTQ+ community during the Marriage Equality campaign and as a result of the vote in favour. To do this, I have divided the research question into four sub questions as follows:

- 1 How did 'Yes Equality' use Irish nationalism as a tactic to achieve a vote in favor of Marriage Equality during there '100 Days of Campaigning'?
- 2 Has Irish nationalism been redefined in the eyes of Irish citizens as a result of the passing of same-sex marriage?
- 3 Does the current interpretation of Irish nationalism better reflect the values of 'Yes' voters in the Marriage Equality referendum?
- 4 How has the concept of Queer Nationalism been affected following the campaign for and passing of same-sex marriage in Ireland?

This chapter will explore the research methods used in the fieldwork and explain the reasoning for the methodological decisions. The layout of the chapter will begin with defining and explaining the research methods used, namely qualitative research. Secondly, it will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of focus groups – the chosen method of fieldwork for this research project. Next, this chapter will discuss the sample participants and reasons why the specific participants were chosen to contribute to this research project. Fourthly, the potential biases will be discussed. Finally, this chapter will discuss the ethical nature of the research before concluding.

Research Methods – Qualitative Research

The above questions fall under the conceptual framework of Exploratory Research. Jubb defines exploratory research as “a methodological approach that is primarily concerned with discovery and with generating or building theory” (2006:110). As a consequence of both the recentness of the Marriage Equality campaign and its initial worldwide uniqueness as a referendum, exploratory research appeared the most relevant framework for this research project.

Jubb recommends the implementation of qualitative research methods in exploratory research (ibid). Qualitative research is described as a naturalistic, interpretative approach, concerned with exploring phenomena ‘from the interior.’ (Flick, 1998) Denzin and Lincoln propose that qualitative research includes “field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings... qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (2011:3). The nature of qualitative research is often flexible and focuses on a deep rather than broad volume of research.

The further rationale for having used qualitative methods in this project follows the popular methodologies used by social scientists in Queer studies. Catherine Nash refers to this as a “queer methodology” or “a queered methodological perspective” (2010:130). For the most part, this queer methodological perspective takes its form in qualitative research as it recognises the importance of personal stories and experiences when speaking on complex issues of gender and sexuality. I followed Nash’s approach in her research ‘Queer Conversations’ by using “classical qualitative technical methods of data collection” (ibid:131), namely focus groups. The reasoning for this shadows Nash’s reasoning: it allowed for knowledge on lived experiences rather than strict formulations. (ibid: 132)

Focus Group Strengths and Limitations

Burnham et al define focus groups as a carefully planned discussion composed of purposely selected individuals to obtain perceptions on a specific topic (2008:129). The differences between focus groups and group interviews are described as being due to the importance of group interaction in focus groups (ibid).

The main strength of using a focus group in this research project relates to Burnham's suggestion about sensitive topics; "The sensitivity of an issue may be an additional justification for choosing focus groups" (2008:131). Having a group of people with similar stories, experiences and understandings speak together about a difficult subject – which sexual citizenship often is – creates an atmosphere of support and unity which a one-to-one interview may not achieve, thus producing more in-depth discussions or open conversations. As Burnham goes on to further explain; "people's confidence will grow as they find others in the group with similar views and experiences struggling to find solutions to common challenges." (ibid) However, to counter this positive, it must be noted that focus groups are limited to small numbers of between four and ten participants. The weaknesses of a focus group is thus that the pool of participants is too limited to form any generalizations about a specific group as a result. The results may be indicative, but there is no telling how representative they may be regardless of how carefully participants are selected (ibid:134).

I found the benefits of the opportunity for in-depth conversation outweighed the disadvantage of a small participant pool and thus held three separate focus groups, the demographics of which will now be explored.

Sample Participants

The participants in this research topic were Irish voters in the Marriage Equality referendum in May 2015. Further refinements had to be made due to the time and resource restraints on this research project. For that reason, three focus groups were established:

- Focus Group 1: Heterosexual 'Yes' Voters
- Focus Group 2: Queer, Under-25 'Yes' Voters
- Focus Group 3: Queer, Over-30 'Yes' Voters.

I selected four people for each of the focus groups, having contacted and vetted them through the 'Yes Equality Campaigners' Facebook page. The similarities between the three focus groups were that they all identified as having voted 'Yes' in the Marriage Equality Referendum. I selected a group of heterosexual voters to bring the perspective of those who were not personally affiliated with the campaign, but engaged in the vote by being enthused to vote in favor.

The other two focus groups consisted of self-identified Queer Irish citizens. I chose to divide these groups based on their age demographic. The purpose of this was that there would be little difference between the participants in their period of life-cycle, meaning they would have been subject to many of the same life experiences. In other words, they were exposed to the same generational-effect. Placing age as a fixed variable allowed me to narrow the parameters of the conversation within the focus group and to understand better where the differences in experiences or opinions stemmed from. It furthermore allowed an opportunity for the participants to feel more open and comfortable discussing this topic with each other as sexuality is often a conversation that is not spoken about cross-generationally.

Despite identifying as Queer and within a specific age bracket, the participants varied in terms of gender-identity, sexuality, race and class. The rationale behind this choice of participants was that, even within the LGBTQ+ community, equality can be experienced in different ways by different people, based on their level of privilege. For example: a white cis-gender gay man may have a very different experience of inclusion in normative society than a black transgender bisexual woman.

I fielded a pilot focus group with the committee of the Maynooth University LGBTQ+ society in order to gain feedback on my facilitation of the focus group, the prompt questions

and in order to estimate the best timeframe to set the focus group in my actual research in order to allow for in-depth conversation without risking too much stray from the subject matter. This pilot focus group provided constructive feedback in suggesting I edit some prompt questions to keep the focus group more steadily on the subject at hand.

‘Insider status’ and Potential Biases

As Nash points out, “For many academics interested in gendered, embodied and sexualised lives... our fieldwork is located, if not directly in our own personal social and political spaces, then in spaces where we are at least potential ‘insiders’ – gay men and lesbians comfortably part of the crowd” (2010:129). The same is true for myself and as a member of the Irish LGBTQ+ community and past campaigner for Marriage Equality, I am aware I bring forward a certain amount of ‘insider’ bias. To combat this, I have adopted a reflexive approach which Yip describes as allowing the researcher to examine where they fit with respect to their research and what impact that may have on the results (2010). Roberts quotes Ritchie et al in stating “Reflexivity is important in striving for objectivity and neutrality. We try to reflect upon ways in which bias might creep into our qualitative research practice, and acknowledge that our own background and beliefs can be relevant here.” (2014:453) While it would be naïve to aim for neutrality in this issue, the recognition of my own personal bias allows me to be reflexive in this and to be aware of its potential effect on my research with an aim to minimize this.

However, there are also benefits of having ‘insider’ status particularly when working with minority groups such as the LGBTQ+ community. As Roberts notes, one of the clear benefits of working within our own circles is that shared experiences may provide an increased trust between the researcher and participants (2014:456). Roberts describes Homfray’s research that insider status made it easier to elicit information from his respondents, particularly over sensitive issues around sexuality and its effects (ibid).

Ethical Considerations

Due to its association with human subjects, political and sociological field research brings specific challenges which are not encountered to the same degree in other disciplines (Burnham et al, 2008:282) Ethics in social science research is intrinsically linked with two areas; consent and potential harm.

Consent: This research project tackled the issue of consent by ensuring all participants in interviews and focus groups were over the age of 18, and thus no parental consent was required. The individuals were, in all aspects, capable and legally entitled to give their own consent to being a part of the research. To give consent, one must be fully informed as to what it is they are consenting to. I developed a consent agreement which can be found in the appendix and which all participants read, agreed to and signed before the research was conducted.

Potential harm: The question of potential harm in social science research has particular impact when discussing issues such as sexuality and gender. Detamore discusses the “politics of intimacy” which he explains as a particular set of questions about the ethical nature of a research method when the question is of an intimate nature such as sexuality. The queer community has particular needs that citizens outside of this community may not encounter. This includes the issue of being ‘outed’ as a part of the queer community which is still a concern for many members. To control potential harm to any participants in the research, I drafted a ‘Safe Space and Confidentiality Agreement’ for all participants to read, agree to and sign along with the consent form. A copy of this policy can be found in the appendix. The purpose of this was to ensure that all participants would be able to speak openly and freely about their own opinions and experiences without repercussions and to ensure all conversations were kept confidential outside of the research project. Furthermore, names of all participants have been replaced with random pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research project was undertaken through qualitative methods, namely focus groups, in order to gain in-depth and personal perspectives. The focus groups were divided by sexual orientation and age in order to have similar groups conversing together to create a comfortable and environment and to maximise contribution of participants. All ethical considerations were taken into account and addressed accordingly.

Research Findings

The following chapter describes the findings and knowledge gained through the three focus groups conducted. The chapter is divided into five subsections in order to gain an easier insight into the connection between the focus group comments and the research questions identified in the introductory chapter. The five sub-sections are as follows:

- Understanding of Irish nationalism,
- Nationalism as a Yes Equality campaign tactic,
- Effects of Marriage Equality on Irish nationalism,
- Personal connection to Irish identity,
- Personal connection to Queer identity.

Understanding of Irish Nationalism

Anderson defines nationalism as an “imagined community,” one that is built by those who identify within it. The purpose of this section of conversation within the focus groups was to establish how each of the varying groups imagined and interpreted their community; that being the Irish nation. Each focus group contributed similar themes with their understanding of Irish nationalism; particularly the importance of religion and sport. It appears from the focus groups that each group, regardless of variables such as age or sexuality, had similar experiences of being Irish growing up, as highlighted in the following extracts:

Focus Group 1: Heterosexual Yes Voters

<i>Tom</i>	For me, being Irish meant playing football but not hurling, because hurling practice was on a Sunday and that’s when we went to mass. And I think that 100% defines what my upbringing of being Irish was.
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Focus Group 2: Queer under-25 Yes Voters

<i>Jane</i>	My parents really prioritised... knowing where we came from and touring the country. Me and my brothers grew up watching Fr. Ted as well so there was a huge link between Irish, Irish humour and religion or Catholicism. When I think about Ireland I think about how passionately religious people were back in the day.
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Focus Group 3: Queer over-30 Yes Voters

Jim	For me, being from the middle of the country, there was always a strong sense of Catholicism as well as GAA. If you didn’t play GAA you weren’t Irish. Offaly is a huge football county so you had to play it, that was it.
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Here, the consensus between the focus groups that Irish nationalism had its roots in Catholicism, sport and community can be seen. There was a similar consensus with regard to whether they felt they could connect to this sense of Irishness, with each focus group

suggesting elements of Irish nationalism which they felt were separate from their own identities.

However, there was an obvious distinction between Focus Group 1, conducted with heterosexual Irish citizens, and both Focus Group 2 and 3, which consisted of members of the LGBTQ community from different age groups. The former spoke about how one section of nationalism didn't connect to them. Alternatively, the focus groups consisting of the queer community spoke with strong negative connections to what was associated with being Irish, particularly with reference to how their sexuality prevented this connection.

Focus Group 1: Heterosexual Yes Voters

<i>Tom</i>	I think one thing that I didn't identify, just in my experience of Irish culture, was just accepting that you have to have this respect and acceptance of historical, religious and social norms that you are brought up with and this big air of "this is the way things are" and you've got to be hush hush if you've got any questions about the way things are.
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Focus Group 2: Queer under-25 Yes Voters

<i>Ali</i>	I began to hate everything about Ireland and what I associated Ireland as being because in rural Ireland... everyone hated non-nationals, they hated travellers, they hated gays, they hated women, like name any category of humans and they probably disliked them and it just became this increasing culture of intolerance that I just didn't feel comfortable in and I linked that so strongly with the church presence. I began to dissociate myself from it.
<i>Jack</i>	Like Ireland's very much about being a man in the macho sense. Be sporty and provide the income, be harsh and have a lack of feelings. There was no way that being a man and Irish and gay were going to co-exist while I was growing up.

Focus Group 3: Queer over-30 Yes Voters

<i>Jim</i>	For me, I suppose I did (connect to Irish nationalism) up to a certain extent,
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up until I started questioning my sexuality and then I kind of starting questioning everything the church said and then I started questioning this whole thing of if I had to play sports, even though I did enjoy them. I actually began to feel pretty uncomfortable playing sports once I started questioning my sexuality because of changing room talk. Everyone was called a queer or a faggot and it was just absolutely ridiculous and made me feel ridiculously uncomfortable so that was the end of sports for me and then I really disconnected from this sense of Irishness because I just didn't believe in it at all.

The comparison between the heterosexual citizens' and queer citizens' opinion of nationalism draws back to Nagel's question on who in a nation conducts the "imagining" that Anderson speaks of. It would seem, from these focus groups, that the imagining in Irish society and thus the creation of Irish nationalism has been conducted with a heteronormative slant. This echoes Nagel's studies into the gendering of nationalism as a masculine and heteronormative creation.

Conclusion:

It can be concluded from the above interpretations and opinions on Irish nationalism that nationalism in itself is not a representative field. The positive viewpoints from the heterosexual participants in contrast with the more complex views of nationalism from the Queer participants suggest that Irish nationalism has been dominated by the heteronormative majority, as echoes Nagel's opinion in 'Masculinity and Nationalism.' While this heterosexual imagining may represent the majority of Ireland's citizens, the negative impacts it can have on its non-heterosexual citizens is clear.

Nationalism as a ‘Yes Equality’ campaign tactic

In the beginning of this research project, one key question which was posed was ‘how did the Yes Campaign use Irish nationalism as a tactic to achieve a vote in favour?’ Due to the vastness of the Yes Campaign, this research project focused specifically on Yes Equality during their ‘100 Days of Campaigning.’ From the Focus Groups, it was clear that nationalism, or Irish identity, was used to appeal to the majority of Irish people, as was necessary to succeed in a popular vote for Marriage Equality. The focus groups identified three main areas in which Yes Equality did this:

- Irish and Catholic values,
- The ‘family’ appeal,
- The Irish language.

These coincided with the areas recognised by the focus groups when asked to discuss what they brought up to understand Irishness as.

Irish Language

Tom, Group 1

The whole idea of ‘Votail Tá Comhionnas’ was such a stroke of genius by the ‘Yes’ side... It (the Irish language) is making such a massive comeback among students and the Yes side really tapped into that. That’s why they were so successful... they were the right choice, the Irish choice.

Family Values

Ann, Group 3

Thinking about the BeLonGTo video “Bring your family with you” it shows that its not just us individually, but it affects everyone. If you know someone who’s gay or even not, it affects future generations as well, like... Coming back to the Irish thing, the one thing we do well is family. When you put family to it, it pulls on our heartstrings

Al, Group 3

The greatest strength of the Yes Equality campaign was relating it to people’s real life experiences. What mattered to people? It was the wellbeing of their friends and family and they showed this was a factor. They showed it affected people beyond an abstract notion of who can do what.

Cat, of Focus Group 2, described this method of connecting the campaign to Irish values as “incredibly effective as a campaign”, going on to note that “we’ve been handed a hand book in how to win a vote in the Irish people.” The result of 62% in favour echoes the effectiveness of the campaign, moving it from an LGBTQ issue to an Irish issue, which is further reflected by the thousands of emigrated Irish people who returned ‘home to vote.’ This hashtag, which was trending internationally on Twitter for the duration of May 22nd 2015, epitomises the sense that this issue was an important one for all Irish people. Joan of Focus Group 3 described this mass movement home of the emigrated Irish, stating “It leads back to nationality, it’s that the constitution needs to be changed and if you are Irish, well, your country was going to make a massive change. You need to come back and be a part of that and make history” (Joan, Focus Group 3).

On the other hand, it is evident that the use of nationalism within Yes Equality’s campaign tactics were not immune to negative effects. In particular, it was drawn upon by the focus groups from members of the Queer community (Focus Groups 2 and 3) that to use Irish nationalism, it was necessary to take a move away from Queer nationalism or Queer identity. Members from both focus groups described the particular kind of LGBTQ person who was used in the course of the campaign, at the cost of a more rounded and substantive representation of the Queer community as a whole.

Selective Representation of the Queer community

Ann, Group 3

The Yes Equality campaign were very shrewd in the people they chose to represent them. They were very well spoken, the likes of Colm O’Gorman and such.

It was very much so a white, male, cisgender, gay face. The elite of the minority I suppose. I hate to say this, but we were still appealing to the 90%. We were appealing to the heterosexual community and we kind of

were, this sounds awful, but we were putting on a show. Let's show the best of the best.

Ali, Group 2

You had to present yourself in a certain way and that meant that so many people had to pigeon hole themselves or essentially lie. It was so frustrating to see so many aspects of what queer is just swept under the carpet. And what that did was not just push one category of queer upwards, but it absolutely quashed the rest.

Cat, Group 2

It only benefited a very small section of people who were chosen to be what looked like the perfect family: people who stayed in relationships and weren't having loads of partners because this seemed to be the concern. We presented a view of ourselves that was actually pretty unrealistic and I know that did a lot of damage.

The older age category of the Queer community, namely Focus Group 3, suggested this was a necessary step in order to secure the vote and one which outweighed the negatives associated with the erasure of queer subculture, stating “we weren't talking to our own community. We were talking to that 90% who needed to get out and vote” (Ann, Focus Group 3). Participants from the focus group on under-25 year old Queer people could also recognise the necessity in putting specific parts of the Queer community to the side-lines throughout the campaign, but in doing so, drew attention to the fact that it had a damaging effect on the Queer community itself: “Of course it did a lot of damage to our community, but it's what worked when you walked into a 70 year olds house” (Cat, Focus Group 2).

In contrast to the consideration by, particularly, the over-30 group of the queer community, Focus Group 2 placed a strong focus on the damage this did to the LGBTQ citizens. Their comments suggest that, though a ‘Yes’ vote was won, the tactics used to achieve this win did more harm than good. There was an obvious sense of anger from Focus Group 2 at having their own identities pushed to the side for the sake of a simpler debate or more ‘Yes’ votes. This emotion is highlighted in the following extracts:

Focus Group 2: Queer Under-25 Yes voters

Ali I don't think we should have risked so much just so some straight people could have had a little bit of a debate. That's literally what this was. I am not around for seeing my rights debated. The majority of those questions being answered for them won't change how they act in every day life and that wasn't worth the trauma of what happened throughout the referendum.

Jane And you think back to the statuses and the YouTube videos and the canvassing. We were begging people to vote for us and crying in thanks when they did. That's messed up when they're the people who oppressed us in the first place.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident that the Yes Campaign, in particular Yes Equality, attempted to appeal to Irish values, identity and nationalism in order to motivate the population into using their vote and, simultaneously, casting that vote in favour of Marriage Equality. This mirrors the Irish Times articles in the Literature Review chapter. There is agreement across all varying focus groups that this tactic was effective in its aim. Nonetheless, it must also be noted that this tactic came with negative side effects for the community it was claiming to represent. There is a significant knowledge gap in both academia and news publications with regard to this negative and even damaging effect to the Queer community and is an area of study which deserves more research.

Effects of Marriage Equality on Irish Nationalism

A further question posed to this research project was the effect the campaign and subsequent result of the Marriage Equality referendum had on the ‘Yes’ voter’s sense and feeling of Irish nationalism. An interesting contrast between the focus groups can be seen in the depth and lasting effect of any change to Irish nationalism over the ‘100 Days of Campaigning’ and the eleven months that have since followed.

In the main, the focus groups had a positive view on the influence of the Marriage Referendum on Irish nationalism, suggesting it has been the dawning of a more liberal and accepting Ireland, with a focus on values of generosity and welcoming rather than on conservative religious standing. This opinion is outlined in the following focus group extracts, with Focus Group 1 considering the upholding of Irish values and Focus Group 3 suggesting the change in acceptance of homosexuality:

Focus Group 1: Heterosexual Yes Voters

<i>Zoe</i>	I think that what it means to be Irish now is like that we’re a very liberal nation, aside from all the problems we still have... Like, we’re such a forward thinking nation that by popular vote we could put this referendum into constitution, be the first country to. So for such a Catholic country I think it’s such a big feat.
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Focus Group 3: Queer over-30 Yes Voters

<i>Al</i>	I think the whole idea of Irishness has changed a lot and moved on from a lot of different perspectives. Apart from the whole conservative Catholic side of it that has been dwindling more and more, but you don’t have to have ten generations of family living in the country anymore. You can be Irish if your parents are from Malawi or whatever now, though people are still adapting to it of course.
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The following extracts from Focus Group 2 epitomise the opinions of those who believe any positive change in Irish acceptance of the LGBTQ community was short lived or false. The

opinion here is that Irish nationalism remains conservative and potentially homophobic towards the LGBTQ community, thus having become no more accepting, open or liberal as a nation despite popular views.

Focus Group 2: Queer under-25 Yes Voters

<i>Ali</i>	All they cared about was that one referendum because it was the popular thing to do or because everyone liked that rainbow sticker or their friends were doing it. It was the talk of the town but nobody cares now. So we're just left in this limbo where I think more and more queers are just going to leave even though we're supposedly a more accepting country now, but we don't fit anywhere.
<i>Jack</i>	All of the acceptance came with a lot of terms and conditions. For me, it was like: You can be gay but don't bring home a sissy boy. You can be gay but don't shove it in our face. You can be gay, you can get married but you can't have kids.
<i>Ali</i>	All they've done is tick a yes box but all those implicit biases are still there. All the questions are still there and the majority of them haven't been answered because we had to make ourselves smaller to cater to their needs so all it has done is make them a little bit less vocally awful, while simultaneously radicalising the people who are openly homophobic to be even worse.

Conclusion

There are mixed opinions as to whether the Marriage Equality referendum changed Ireland and the sense of nationalism associated with that on a long term basis. While some argue that it was proof that Ireland is now a more liberal, accepting nation, counterarguments claim the referendum was a 'once off' and Ireland remains engrained with conservative, Catholic traits at its core. This question is further explored in the next section of this chapter, 'Personal Nationalism.'

Personal Connection to Irish Identity

This section attempts to identify the manner and depth individuals relate themselves to what they believe to be the broad sense of nationalism in Ireland. The question revolves around whether ‘Yes’ voters feel more connection to their own Irishness as a result of the passing of Marriage Equality and whether Irish nationalism better reflects their own views and identity.

Following the trend in the previous questions, Focus Group 2 displayed a differing opinion as the other groups. Whether this is connected to the common radicalisation of youth queer culture, or due to the influence of a dominating voice within the group is unclear due to the limited number of participants. Regardless of the reasoning, Focus Group 2 displayed a lack of connection with their own ties to Ireland. The majority of participants in this group stated that the campaign had no positive lasting effects on their connection to Irishness, as can be seen in the following extracts.

Focus Group 2: Queer under-25 Yes Voters

<i>Ali</i>	I do not feel more Irish. I feel ashamed to be Irish. I want to distance myself from that label. I hate that it was publicised as a positive thing because I hate what was done and how it was done. I hate that Ireland’s history as this Catholic oppressive culture has continued and it’s still vicious and visible.
<i>Jack</i>	I felt more Irish and more proudly Irish in the two or three months after the referendum but a year on, it’s just gone back to right before the campaign started.

While the above opinions are valid and worthy of further research, they were not the most popular view. Every participant in the other two focus groups, as well as other participants from their own focus group, spoke of a feeling of pride as a result of the referendum. This pride is inherently connected with their own Irish national identity.

<i>Cat, Group 2</i>	I do feel more Irish... I feel like being gay is less the front side of me.
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	At home, I just feel more normal and less like it's a thing... I'm much prouder to be Irish. I know that sounds incredibly fickle, but it's what it is.
<i>Tom, Group 1</i>	I just felt really proud and so great for the reputation. I think that our international reputation is 1000% boosted by the outcome.
<i>Joan, Group 3</i>	I've grown up with Irish Catholic, repressed, sexist, racist society that wasn't something to be proud of. We were always trying to fight against it. Whereas now, the referendum is the majority.

A noteworthy area of conversation brought up, particularly in Focus Group 3, were the negative effects a 'No' vote would have had on the participants connection with Irish nationalism, which apparently would have been much more extreme than any positive that has come from the 'Yes' vote. Several participants spoke about their serious considerations of emigration dependent on the result of the vote: "It wasn't until the Marriage referendum that I seriously considered leaving the country because I had said to myself when campaigning started that if it was a 'No' vote, I was gone. I couldn't see a future for myself in the country" (Jim, Focus Group 3). This opinion was reiterated by another participant who stated that, should the vote have failed, they would have been "on the first plane out of here" (Ann, Focus Group 3).

While public opinion may suggest that the identities of both being Irish and being queer can now be intertwined due to popular acceptance of same-sex marriage, an interesting quote from Focus Group 2 suggests otherwise: "I feel like the only time I can identify with both of those things at the same time is when I'm like, out drinking in a gay bar because it's like, the amalgamation of the two. Especially if you're drinking Guinness in drag" (Jane, Focus Group 2). The suggestion here is that both identities are still separate and epitomised by their stereotypical attributes; the Irish drinking and the Queer community dressed in drag. Whether or not this particular example was meant in humour, it nonetheless brings to light an intriguing opinion on the separation between the two identities; that both being Irish and being Queer have separate cultures, traditions and so forth, and that the amalgamation of the two is rare, despite the integration of the Queer community into Irish rites of passage such as marriage.

Conclusion

It conclusion, it would appear from the limited number of participants in the focus groups conducted, that both the heterosexual and the homosexual 'Yes' voters have a reawakened pride in their nationalism. Their comments suggest that they believe Irishness to better reflect their own views as a growingly liberal nation. However, there is significant reason to further research the opinions of participants in Focus Group 2, who have had their sense of nationalism shattered by an extremely negative experience throughout the campaign for Marriage Equality.

Personal Connection to Queer Identity

As outlined in the Literature Review, there is a large body of academia under Queer Theory that suggests Marriage Equality is not necessarily a positive step forward for the Queer community, due to it causing the erasure of Queer culture. Walker has gone as far as to describe this subculture as a nationality in itself, as the Queer identity is so strong and embodies a number of the characters of national identities. (2001) This strong connection to and the importance of the Queer community to its members was outlined by Focus Group 2:

Focus Group 2: Queer Under-25 Yes Voters

<i>Jane</i>	when I came to college there was a guaranteed safety net even in the fact that just Pride (LGBT) Society existed. If my family were to have turned around and said “I don’t accept you, this isn’t normal” I’d still have had all the other people in the Pride society, my surrogate family.
<i>Ali</i>	I came into UCD and I finally had a community around me, I finally had gays around me and it was great. We were one big family.

The above first hand accounts represent the level of importance Queer identity may have to a member of the LGBTQ community. Both of the above participants correlated the Queer community with ‘family’, suggesting that ties they had to one another extended beyond the mere fact of having a minority sexuality, but connected to Walker’s comparison to a ‘Queer Nation.’

However, if one takes the argument of Queer theorists that Marriage Equality is damaging to this identity, it could be argued that Ireland’s Marriage Equality Referendum had a negative impact for its LGBTQ citizens. This argument was first outlined in the above section ‘Use of Nationalism’, highlighting the manner in which Queer identity was side-lined in order to appeal to the majority of the voting population. There is a significant knowledge gap in Queer literature in regards to the effect this side-lining of identity for the purpose of the majority in campaigns may have on members of the Queer community. Focus Group 2 spoke in detail about the damaging impact this had on them personally.

Focus Group 2: Queer Under-25 Yes Voters

<i>Cat</i>	We are seeing a lot of exhaustion across the country in Pride societies though. There is total exhaustion. It's like we're jetlagged, like we're kind of done at the minute. Not that we don't care about the LGBT community but because we put a lot into it, we suffered a lot in those ways to get that far and then they feel just, done.
<i>Ali</i>	Every positive experience I'd had as a queer person was taken out from under me and suddenly I had nothing positive to cling to anymore. That referendum erased all good experience I had of being a queer individual.

To explore the effect of the Marriage Equality campaign on the Queer community further, the participants were asked how their connection with the Queer community and their sense of Queer identity had been impacted in the past eleven months, since the passing of the Marriage Equality referendum.

Focus Group 2: Queer under-25 Yes Voters

<i>Ali</i>	Rather than making the community stronger, I felt like I didn't even have a community anymore. The one community I had found within Ireland where I fit had been completely fragmented and torn apart by this.
<i>Cat</i>	I feel less part of the queer community. We lost a bit of our community because we had something to fight for that was very clear and then we just dissipated.

Here, there is an interesting comparison between the older and younger members of the Queer community, with Focus Group 2 speaking negatively about their loss of Queer identity. Focus Group 3 juxtaposed this sense by commenting positively on the confidence of the Queer community and the cross-generational connection which had grown within the Queer community as a result.

Focus Group 3: Queer Over-30 Yes Voters

<i>Jim</i>	It's actually quite interesting what the Marriage Equality referendum has done for people's sexualities. When I started first year in Maynooth three years ago, I was closeted. I was so insecure about my sexuality. Whereas this years first years who have come into Pride Society since the Marriage referendum, well, I've never come across ones like them before. They are ridiculously outspoken and so comfortable in their sexualities. It's really empowering to see.
<i>Joan</i>	I think it also did a lot of change within the gay community overall. After the Marriage Referendum passed, everyone had come together to work together, the older and younger gay people. I've noticed there's no more arguments of 'the older generation had it so hard, we had to go through beatings and illegality and it was really hard' and us kind of resenting the younger people. But with the new generation coming up, it's equal now.

Conclusion

This section has highlighted the knowledge gap in relation to the negative aspects of Marriage Equality for the Queer community. While same-sex marriage is supported by the vast majority of LGBTQ people, it is worth noting that there are side-effects that are yet to be predicted or commented on in either academia or popular readership. The importance of the Queer Community to LGBTQ people may surpass the importance of their own national identity, as considered in the above focus groups, and the processes campaigns for equality must take bears the risk of damaging the all-inclusive, wholly representative nature of queer communities, begging the question if the prize of equality is worth the price of normality.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research question was to establish whether there is a connection between nationalism and sexual citizenship, specifically within the framework of the use and reshaping of Irish nationalism during the Marriage Equality campaign of 2015. This question was divided into four sub-questions, with the answers to each being individually discussed below. Overall, there was little consensus between the focus groups in relation to whether Irish nationalism had been changed at all throughout the course of the campaign or as a result of the vote in favour. This chapter will examine the results of this research under the subsections of results of the research questions, importance of this research, limitations to the research conducted, possibilities of further research and an overall conclusion to the research project. Through this, the research project will conclude that, while this research has taken initial steps in filling the current gap of knowledge in relation to the connection between nationalism and sexual citizenship, there is much work still to be done.

Research Questions

This section will seek to answer the original sub-questions posed in the introduction of this research project.

1- How was nationalism incorporated into the campaign?

The focus groups revealed consensus that, certainly, nationalism was a theme used throughout the campaign by ‘Yes Equality’ and other campaigning groups such as ‘BeLonGTo Yes.’ However, this is where the consensus ends. The focus groups revealed inconsistent opinions as to the value of this. While some described it as “a stroke of genius” others demonised it as catering to the majority and thus further isolating the minority who the campaign was supposedly for.

2- Has Irish nationalism been redefined in the eyes of Irish citizens as a result of the passing of same-sex marriage?

Again, the focus groups highlighted differing opinions as to whether nationalism has changed over the past year. While the majority agreed that Irish nationalism now better reflects a

liberal nation, it was clear that they believe Irishness at its core values and meaning has remained the same. In an opposing opinion, it was brought to the attention of the researcher that a subset of individuals believe no change has occurred and, while Ireland may be viewed from outsiders as more liberal, the entrenched homophobias and conservative biases remain strong.

3- Does the current interpretation of Irish nationalism better reflect the values of 'Yes' voters in the Marriage Equality referendum?

Similar to the above two questions, there was a majority trending belief that Irish nationalism has made way for a more liberal interpretation of Irish values which stronger reflect a modern Irish view. Contrastingly, a number of participants spoke from their experiences of continuing conservativeness and homophobia in Irish culture which has not been amended from the referendum.

4- How has the concept of Queer Nationalism been affected following the campaign for and passing of same-sex marriage in Ireland?

While the older LGBTQ+ focus group considered the inclusion in marriage to be a positive step for the Queer community, empowering and connecting members cross-generationally, there was a contrasting view that the Queer community has become less 'queer' as a result. The selective representation of the Queer community has been attributed to filtering only a white, cisgender, gay view and has thus isolated Queer people from their own community.

Importance and future areas of study

From the research undertaken here, it is evident that the questions were inconclusive. However, this is perhaps the ideal outcome for this particular instance of exploratory research as it highlights the importance of research into this specific area. By bringing to light the inconsistencies of opinions between the heterosexual, older LGBTQ+ and younger LGBTQ+ participants, it has become apparent that a separate view of Marriage Equality must be explored. The negative reactions and experiences of the younger LGBTQ+ participants highlights an area ignored in all current research, books and news publications on the passing of Marriage Equality; that being the damaging effect both the campaign and the result had on

a number of young LGBTQ+ people. Through coercion and encouragement to ‘come out’ before their time, young people were placed in emotional and physical danger. Through a lack of substantive representation of the Queer community, a portion of this minority group felt isolated from their own cause. Through the exhaustion of the LGBTQ+ community and campaigners following last year, serious issues that still need to be tackled have been abandoned in the side lines. It is evident that this opinion is invisible within the popular readership on Marriage Equality and is an area worthy of significant future study.

Limitations

As outlined in the Methodologies chapter, there were significant limitations in this research project. Due to minimal resources, particularly time, only a small number of participants could contribute to this work. While the focus groups presented variables across different age demographics and sexual orientations, they were limited in the number of people represented. Furthermore, only those who were a part of the ‘Yes’ campaign featured as participants. This particular research would be an interesting area to include those who abstained from voting or voted ‘No’. It is also recognised that researcher bias was most likely present to a certain extent, having been involved in the ‘Yes’ campaign. It would be intriguing to see an outsider’s perception of the field research gathered to consider whether this could be interpreted differently from a non-biased researcher, though by being aware of potential bias it is felt that this was successfully avoided.

Conclusion

To conclude, this research project will end on a quote from Panti Bliss, a drag queen and a leading activist in the Marriage Equality movement in Ireland. Panti has epitomised the connection between sexual citizenship and nationalism. Her “Noble Call” speech, which inspired thousands of Irish people to campaign for equal rights for LGBTQ citizens, was given following a re-enactment performance of the 1913 Dublin Lockout in the Abbey Theatre – immediately linking the struggle of Irish ancestors for their rights with the struggle of Irish LGBTQ citizens for equality. This year, on Christmas Day, a day treasured by the conservative, Catholic Irish people, RTE broadcasted a speech by Panti titled “Queen of Ireland’s Christmas Message.” Promoting a gay, HIV positive, drag queen on Christmas Day marks the ultimate change in Irish society of embracing LGBTQ people as accepted and

equal Irish people in a nation which ignored, hid, criminalised and discriminated them for so long. Panti's words speak to the core question of this thesis, whether Ireland has changed because of the referendum. She believes it has;

“I live in Ireland because I love it, I love it fiercely. But I wasn't always sure that Ireland loved me back... I wasn't always sure that 'Irishness' was elastic enough to include someone like me. I am now. We didn't change the definition of Marriage on May 22nd, but we did expand the definition of 'Irishness' to include people like me.”

Panti Bliss

“Queen of Ireland's Christmas Message”

December 25th 2015

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