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Abstract

As youth civic engagement is widely considered important for social cohesion and democracy, concerns have been expressed regarding a perceived decline in civic and political engagement among young people throughout the western world. While research has shown that the social environment is influential in terms of the development of civic values, knowledge and behaviours among youth, limited research has been conducted on these issues in an Irish context. Drawing on survey research conducted with 167 young people aged 12–15 years in Irish secondary schools, this paper examines young people's civic attitudes and behaviours and how they are linked to their social contexts. Findings indicate that youth report high levels of social responsibility values but low engagement in both online and offline civic engagement. Furthermore, while parent, peer, school and/or community contexts were found to have a significant influence on youths' social responsibility values and offline civic behaviours, youth's online civic behaviours were not connected to these social environments. This study provides insights into the socialisation of civic values and behaviours among young people in Ireland and highlights the importance of investigating the link between the social context and different forms of youth civic involvement.

1. Introduction

Researchers and theorists contend that youth civic engagement plays a key role in fostering social and personal development, and argue that cultivating greater youth civic engagement should be a priority concern for research and policy (Malin & Pos, 2015; Stefaniak, Bilewicz & Lewicka, 2017). However, despite the implications that youth civic engagement has for both individual development and social cohesion, the processes by which young people become interested in the 'common good', acquire positive social values, and take prosocial or civic action, have yet to be fully elucidated (Luengo-Kanacri et al., 2016). This paper explores civic values and behaviours among early adolescents in Ireland and aims to generate greater understanding of the how young people's civic attitudes and behaviours are linked to their social experiences or relationships.

The term 'civic engagement' is generally defined as a prosocial intention or behaviour which is targeted at the community or societal level (Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998). Researchers argue that civic engagement is comprised of both a sense of social responsibility and a personal commitment to civic action (Rossi et al., 2016). Social responsibility is typically viewed as a set of social values, representing an individual's regard for the community or concern for the welfare of others in society (Da Silva et al., 2004; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015; Wray-Lake, Syversten & Flanagan, 2016). In this sense, social responsibility is often regarded as a person's sense of 'civic duty' or 'responsibility' to their community or society (Crocetti, Jahromi & Meeus, 2012; Varela & Loreto Martinez, 2018). The term civic action in turn refers the extent to which a person actively engages in prosocial behaviours that aim to help others in the wider community or society (Bowman, 2011; Hermann, 2005). Examples of civic actions include volunteering, charity giving, social or political activism, helping others in need, or resource sharing (Metzger & Smetana, 2010). Youth may also participate in civic behaviours through online or interactive media, such as

by publicly sharing content on social issues or signing online petitions (Hirzalla et al., 2019; Middaugh & Evans, 2018), although this aspect of youth civic engagement has received considerably less attention in the research (Jugert et al., 2013). Overall, civic engagement is considered a multifaceted construct, which reflects both an individual's value orientation *and* their participation in civic actions (Rossi et al., 2016; Sherrod, Torney-Purta & Flanagan, 2010).

It is frequently argued in the literature that active youth civic engagement is fundamental to the positive development of individuals, communities and societies (Ballard, Hoyt & Pachucki, 2018; Hylton, 2018; Rivera & Santos, 2016). Civic engagement is seen as a means by which social connections and trust, or social capital, can be developed between people, nurturing a sense of belonging among young people to something wider than their individual selves (Hylton, 2018; Rivera & Santos, 2016; Shaw et al, 2014; Wray-Lake et al., 2019). Because adolescent civic engagement is a significant predictor of adult levels of engagement, many have argued that youth civic engagement plays an important role in fostering democracy and shaping societal values (Hart, Matsuba & Atkins, 2014; Hope & Jagers, 2014; Finlay et al., 2010; Lenzi et al., 2014). Researchers such as Flanagan and Levine (2010) and Malin and Pos (2015) claim that in order for democracy to thrive, society needs more young people to develop values that motivate them to engage in socially responsible behaviour and to actively participate in the civic domain. Furthermore, research has shown that young people are effective agents of social change, capable of making significant, positive contributions to society (Shaw et al., 2014; Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011).

In addition to the societal benefits, research has shown that civic engagement can have positive developmental impacts for young people (Checkoway, Allison & Montoya, 2005; Malin & Pos, 2015), including increased emotional, social, and cognitive functioning (Lenzi et al., 2014; Schmidt et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2005). Research has shown that children and

adolescents who display higher levels of civic engagement tend to show greater school engagement and better academic performance (Berbiglou et al., 2013; Gerbino et al., 2017) as well as improved physical and psychological well-being (Hart, Matsuba & Atkins, 2014; Schreier, Schonert-Reichl, & Chen, 2013; Wray-Lake et al., 2019). Other research shows that civic engagement is also associated with enhanced social skills and better interpersonal relationships among young people (Cicognani, Klimstra, & Goossens, 2014; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Sallquist et al., 2009).

A number of researchers and theorists have proposed that youth's civic development may be influenced by their interactions within society (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; McIntosh & Youniss, 2010; Sherrod et al., 2010). Support for this proposition comes from the findings of various research studies, which have indicated that the social environment in which a young person grows up has fundamental implications for his or her civic values, knowledge and behaviours (Campbell, 2006; Metzger et al., 2018; Schachner et al., 2018). Although theorists have identified a broad range of socialisation agents, recent research has emphasised the role that young people's immediate social environments play in shaping their civic values and behaviours (Chan, 2011; Sherrod et al., 2010; Torney-Purta, Barber & Wilkenfeld, 2007). In particular, research suggests that parent, school, peer and community contexts exert paramount effects on youth's civic development, due to their close relationship with the young person (Rossi et al., 2016; Wilkenfeld et al., 2010; Zaff et al., 2011). However, understanding about the nature of the relationship that exists between individual aspects of these social contexts and youth's civic values *and* behaviours is still limited (Metzger et al., 2015; Wray-Lake et al., 2016).

In sum, given its relevance for both social well-being and individual development, greater policy and research interest in promoting youth civic engagement has been called for, with researchers emphasising the importance of generating a greater understanding of the

factors that facilitate, or hinder, youth civic engagement in the first instance (Hope & Jagers, 2014; Sam, Wanjobi & Akotia, 2019; Metzger et al., 2015). However, in comparison to the adult literature base, a dearth of research has focused on assessing the development of social responsibility and civic participation among adolescents (Lenzi et al., 2014; Luengo-Kanacri et al., 2016). Even fewer studies have included comparisons of both youth's offline and online civic engagement (Pathak-Shelat & Bhatia, 2019). Thus, the current research aims to generate greater understanding of the socialisation of youth civic engagement, by examining whether adolescents' civic values and behaviours are connected to their social relationships and experiences. In particular, this article sets out to address two specific research questions -

- i) To what extent do early adolescents in Ireland endorse positive social responsibility values, engage in active civic behaviours both online and offline, and foster future civic or altruistic intentions?;
- ii) To what extent are youth's social responsibility values, civic behaviours, and future civic intentions linked to their proximal (parent, peer, school or community) social contexts?

2. Method

2.1 Design

This study employed a cross-sectional research design to assess how adolescents' social environments (e.g. Parents, Peers, Schools, & Communities) influenced their self-reported social responsibility values, current civic behaviours and future civic intentions.

2.2 Participants

A total of 167 (83 male, 83 female, 1 questioning) secondary school students participated in this research. All participants were enrolled in their second year of education at one of three public secondary schools within the Republic of Ireland and were aged between 12-15 years ($M=13.77$, $SD = .50$). Approximately, 90% of participants identified as Irish, a further 8%

identified as being from other European countries, while 2% identified as being of 'other' nationalities. Notably, 84% of adolescents reported living with both parents, 9% reported that they live under the primary care of their father and a further 7% reported living under the primary care of their mother. In addition, approximately 26% of adolescents reported that their mother had received no third level education while 50% reported that their mother had some third level or postgraduate education. However, 24% of adolescents did not respond to this question on maternal education. Furthermore, while the majority (67%) of the sample identified as Catholic, 18% identified as Christian, 1% as Protestant, 1% as Muslim and a further 14% reported being non-religious/atheist. Participants were recruited to this research as part of a larger research study – *Empathy, Social Values and Civic Behaviour among Early Adolescents in Ireland*.

2.3 Procedure

2.3.1 Procedure for School Recruitment Schools were recruited to this study as part of a larger research study. Specifically, post-primary schools located in the Republic of Ireland, as listed on the Department of Education and Skills website, were invited to participate in this study, using a stratified random sampling approach. Stratified random sampling was used to recruit both single-sex and mixed-sex schools from across all four Irish provinces (Ulster, Munster, Connacht, and Leinster), in order to ensure that the composition of selected schools was nationally representative. Overall, 52 schools were invited to participate in the wider research and 12 schools consented to take part. Of the 12 schools who consented to take part in the research, three mixed-gender schools were randomly selected to take part in this study. This resulted in the selection of one Catholic and two Inter-Denominational schools from three rural regions in Ireland (one from Connacht, one from Ulster, and one from Munster). The data collected from the remaining schools were analysed

in a separate research study. For more information about the recruitment process please see Silke et al. (2019).

2.3.2 Procedure for Participants Students in their second year of education at these three participating secondary schools were invited to take part in this research. The researcher verbally outlined the aims and objectives of the study to all students, and any student interested in participating in this study was asked to return a signed parental informed consent and personal assent form to the school. Across the three schools, a total of 302 students were invited to participate in this study. Student response rates of 71%, 79% and 36% were observed from each of the three schools. Thus, an overall student participation rate of 55% was observed. All students who returned signed parental consent and assent forms, and were present on the day of research, were gathered as a group in a specified classroom within their school. Pen-and-paper booklets containing the questionnaire items were distributed to all participating students. This survey took approximately 30-40 minutes for students to complete and all data were collected on an anonymous and confidential basis. The researcher and a designated member of school staff remained with the students during the research process. Once students had completed the questionnaire to their satisfaction, they were thanked for their participation and debriefed. Full ethical approval for this research was granted by the University Research Ethics Committee.

2.4 Materials

A number of survey materials were employed to assess the various constructs of interest. All constructs were operationalised using established self-report scales that had been employed in previous research.

2.4.1 Parental Factors. *Family Democratic Climate* ($\alpha = .73$; Wray-Lake et al., 2016) was assessed on a four-item Likert scale, where higher scores were indicative of a greater level of authoritative parenting (e.g. “my parents/guardians let me have a say, even if they disagree”). *Parent Social Responsibility* ($\alpha = .84$; Flanagan, 2013) was assessed through six-items assessing parental encouragement of social concern and responsibility values (e.g. “my parents/guardians tell me to stand up for others, not just yourself”). Higher scores indicated greater parental promotion of social responsibility values. *Parent Civic Engagement* ($\alpha = .79$; Flanagan et al., 2007) was assessed by a three-item scale, with higher scores indicating greater parental engagement in civic behaviour (e.g. “my parents/guardians do volunteer work in the community”).

2.4.2 Peer Factors. *Prosocial Friend Norms* ($\alpha = .85$; Farrell et al., 2017) were assessed through the use of a six-item Likert scale. Adolescents were asked to indicate how often their friends engage in prosocial activities (e.g. “Do favours for people without expecting something back”). Higher scores represented greater prosocial norms among friendship groups. *Peer Connectedness* ($\alpha = .87$; Aldridge et al. 2016) is an eight-item Likert scale which examines the level of social support between students/peers at school (e.g. “I make friends with students from different backgrounds”). Higher scores represent higher levels of peer support.

2.4.3 School Factors. Six items were used to assess *Student School Engagement* ($\alpha = .86$; Konold et al., 2017). Higher scores were representative of adolescents’ higher levels of engagement with their school (“I want to learn as much as I can at this school”). Flanagan’s et al. (2007) *Social Analysis* scale ($\alpha = .84$) was employed to measure the extent of civic education adolescents received in their school classes (e.g. “In our classes, we learn about things in society that need to be changed”). Higher scores on this scale are indicative of greater levels of civic education. *Open Classroom Climate* ($\alpha = .85$; Flanagan et al., 2007)

was also employed to assess the degree to which adolescents are encouraged to share their opinions in class (e.g. “In my classes, students are encouraged to express their opinions”). Adolescents were asked to respond to this four-item scale, where higher scores are indicative of a more open school classroom environment. Finally, *Perspective Taking Opportunities* ($\alpha = .65$; Flanagan et al., 2007) were measured using three Likert items and assessed the extent to which adolescents were presented with opportunities in their classes to take the perspective of other students or groups in society (e.g. “In my classes, I have opportunities to participate in political or legal role play”). Higher scores reflect greater perspective taking opportunities.

2.4.4 Community Factors. Three aspects of youth’s local neighbourhood contexts were assessed through three separate scales. *Neighbourhood Opportunities* ($\alpha = .87$) were assessed using the four-item Opportunities for Involvement and Satisfaction of One’s Needs scale (Serek & Machackova, 2015). This scale measured the extent to which young people believed that their communities cared about them and provided opportunities for their benefit (e.g. “In this place, there are events and situations which involve people like me”). *Community Connectedness* ($\alpha = .84$; Wray-Lake et al., 2017) is a 6-item scale assessing the degree to which young people feel that individuals in their local communities are connected to one another, where higher scores are representative of a greater sense of neighbourhood connectedness (e.g. “In general. People in my community work together to solve problems”). *Intergenerational Closure* ($\alpha = .82$; Sampson & Graif, 2009) was operationalised as the extent to which young people trusted and formed relationships with other adults in their local communities (e.g. “There are adults in this neighbourhood that children can look up to”). Higher scores indicated more positive intergenerational relationships.

2.4.5 Social Responsibility. The Youth Social Conscience scale (Bebiroglu et al., 2013) was used to assess adolescents’ *Social Responsibility Values* ($\alpha = .86$). The Youth Social Conscience scale is a six-item scale that assesses the sensitivity and sense of

responsibility of youth regarding problems in society. Specifically, adolescents were asked to indicate the extent to which a number of values (e.g. “Helping other people”; “Speaking up for equality”) were important to them. Higher scores were indicative of greater social responsibility values.

2.4.6. Civic Behaviour. Two types of youth civic behaviour were assessed in the current study: Online and Offline Civic Behaviours. Current levels of (offline) *Youth Civic Behaviour* ($\alpha = .79$) were measured using the Voight and Torney-Purta (2013) Civic Behaviour Scale. This scale consists of nine items which measure the extent to which students voluntarily engage in a number of civic behaviours both in and outside school (e.g. “Help make your community a better place for people to live”). Higher scores represent higher levels of current offline civic behaviour. *Online Civic Engagement* was assessed using the five-item scale developed by Serek and Machackova (2014). Adolescents indicated the extent to which they engaged in online civic activities, such as signing an online petition or following social issues through social media (e.g. “Discussed societal or political content on the internet”). Higher scores on this scale indicated higher youth engagement in online civic behaviours.

2.4.7. Future Altruistic Intentions. *Future Altruistic Intentions* ($\alpha = .81$) were assessed using the 6-item Self-Transcendence Scale (Flanagan, 2013). This scale assesses adolescents’ willingness to engage in a number of altruistic behaviours when they are adults (e.g. “In the future, when I’m an adult, I would be willing to earn less money if that would create jobs for unemployed people”). Higher scores on this factor reflect higher willingness to engage in future altruistic acts.

2.5 Statistical Analyses

A series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted in order to investigate whether specific aspects of the parental, peer, school and community contexts were associated with youths' civic values, behaviours and intentions, after controlling for gender and age effects. Supplementary analyses, including correlation analyses, were also carried out in the data.

3. Results

3.1 Missing Data

In order to examine whether missing values in the current study were missing completely at random (MCAR), Little's (1988) MCAR test was applied. Little's test was found to be non-significant ($\chi^2 [7011.85] = 6900, p = .170$), indicating that the data was missing completely at random. Thus, as the data was suitable, missing data was handled using Expectation Maximisation (EM).

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

An overview of mean scores and standard deviations for all scale measures are displayed in Table 1. As can be seen in Table 1, youth evidenced high social responsibility values and appeared to show high levels of intentions to engage in altruistic/civic behaviours as adults. Conversely, youth showed relatively low levels of engagement in both offline and online civic behaviour. In relation to the contextual factors, youth showed moderate to high scores on all contextual factors, with the exception of the parent civic engagement factor, for which youth endorsed low scores. All contextual and outcome factors were also assessed for normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). As can be seen in Table 1, all scales showed acceptable kurtosis levels (< 3 ; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Although the majority of scales also showed acceptable skew levels ($< .80$; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), four factors (Family Democratic Climate, Parent Social Responsibility, Online

Civic Engagement & Youth Social Responsibility Values) showed evidence of minor skewness.

[Insert Table 1 here]

A summary of inter-correlations between variables is also displayed in Table 2. As can be seen in this table, significant, positive correlations were observed between the majority of contextual and outcome variables. However, some notable exceptions were apparent. In particular, youth's online civic engagement was only found to correlate significantly with youth's offline civic behaviour. Overall, these correlation statistics indicated no overly strong relationships ($r > .9$) existed between any of the predictor variables. Additionally, tolerance ($> .1$) and VIF (< 10) values for all predictors, on all outcomes, were also adequate, thereby demonstrating that there was no evidence of multicollinearity in the data and indicating that the data was suitable for further regression analyses. Please see Table 2 for a more detailed summary of these Spearman's rho correlation statistics.

[Insert Table 2 here]

3.3 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses

A series of multiple regression analyses were carried out in order to examine the connection between youth's parental, peer, school and community factors and their civic engagement. Specifically, separate analyses were performed on the data in order to examine how Family Democratic Climate, Parent Social Responsibility Values, Parent Civic Engagement, Prosocial Friend Norms, Peer Connectedness, School Engagement, Classroom Climate, Social Analysis, Perspective Taking Opportunities, Neighbourhood Opportunities, Community Connectedness and Intergenerational Closure predicted each civic outcome (Social Responsibility Values, Offline Civic Behaviour, Online Civic Behaviour & Future Altruistic Intentions). Age and gender effects were controlled for in a first step. All analyses were conducted on SPSS v. 23 (IBM, 2018). Results revealed that the overall predictor models were significant for three of the four outcome measures (Social Responsibility Values, Offline Civic Behaviour and Future Altruistic Intentions). The overall models accounted for a relatively small amount of variance in the social responsibility and future civic intentions outcomes, while the model for Offline Civic Behaviour was found to account for a moderate percentage of variance. The model predicting youth's online civic behaviours was found to be non-significant. A summary of model results is provided in Table 3.

[Insert Table 3 here]

Analyses on the individual civic outcomes revealed that five aspects (*Parent Social Responsibility, Parent Civic Engagement, Prosocial Friend Norms, Classroom Social Analysis & Community Connectedness*) of youth's parent, peer, school, and community contexts were significantly associated with adolescents' civic values, behaviours or intentions – after controlling for youth's age and gender. More specifically, Parent Social

Responsibility was found to be associated with higher levels of youth Social Responsibility Values ($\beta = .26, p = .003$) and Future Altruistic Intentions ($\beta = .19, p = .04$), while Parent Civic Engagement was strongly associated with increased levels of youth's Offline Civic Behaviour ($\beta = .38, p < .001$) and Social Responsibility Values ($\beta = .16, p = .04$) in adolescents. Prosocial Friend Norms had significant, positive associations with youths' Social Responsibility Values ($\beta = .21, p = .02$). One school factor, Classroom Social Analysis ($\beta = .21, p = .02$), and one community factor, Community Connectedness ($\beta = .23, p = .02$), were also found to be significantly associated with higher levels of offline Civic Behaviour. No other significant associations between the main predictor variables and youth's outcome variables were observed (see Table 4).

In addition, youths' age and gender were observed to exert limited, significant effects on youth's civic engagement. Namely, significant age effects were found for youth's civic behaviours, in that older adolescents were found to report significantly lower levels of offline civic engagement than younger adolescents ($\beta = -2.32, p = .01$). Significant gender differences were also observed in relation to youth's future civic intentions, whereby girls were found to endorse significantly higher levels of future altruistic intentions than boys ($\beta = .18, p = .03$). No significant age or gender effects were observed for any other outcome. A full overview of standardised and unstandardized regression weights, and standard errors, is provided in Table 4.

[Insert Table 4 here]

4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine whether the type of social values and civic behaviours expressed by young people in Ireland are connected with their proximal social experiences and relationships. This research provides preliminary evidence to support the hypothesis that youths' social environments are significantly and positively associated with their civic values, behaviours and intentions. Specifically, findings indicated that parent encouragement of social responsibility values; parent modelling of civic behaviours; friends modelling of prosocial behaviours; connection with one's community and quality of civic education received at school are linked to the expression of social responsibility values and/or civic engagement. Overall, these results have several notable implications for research and practice.

First, considerable differences in the distribution of mean scores across youth outcome measures were observed in the current research. In particular, while youth were found to report high levels of social responsibility values and future altruistic intentions, young people showed low engagement in both online and offline civic action. This finding is important as it may indicate that there is a discrepancy between adolescents' self-reported social values or intentions, and their actual civic participation. Given that this research is among the first to examine social values and civic responding among this age group in Ireland, it is difficult to compare this pattern of findings with other Irish examples. Yet evidence from international research does support an emerging trend of low civic participation among young people in a number of different countries (Hylton, 2018; Pryor et al., 2007; Putnam, 2016; Turcotte, 2015). Therefore, the current findings have relevance for practice and policy as they indicate that there may be a climate of low youth civic engagement in Ireland. Nonetheless, it should be noted that other research has indicated that youths' civic participation may also vary depending on the nature of the civic activity being assessed (Gudjonsen, 2016; Metzger et al., 2018). Hence, while youth in the current research

appear to evidence low levels of civic engagement on these measures (e.g. civic behaviour & online civic engagement scales), it is possible that these youth may engage in higher levels of participation in other civic domains. Thus, future research may benefit from clarifying whether youth evidence a lack of interest/engagement in civic activity in general, or a lack interest/engagement in specific civic activities.

However, it is important to note that similar discrepancies between youth reports of their parents' social values and civic behaviours were also observed. Specifically, youth indicated that while their parents promote social responsibility values they tend to not engage in high levels of civic behaviour. This is an important pattern as it suggests that both youth and parents' social values may not align with their civic behaviours. Although similar findings have been observed in other international research (Metzger et al., 2018; Taylor, 2010), greater research is still needed in order to elaborate on why discrepancies between individuals' prosocial values and their civic actions may occur. Future research may benefit from examining the connection between youth's civic values and their engagement in a variety of civic behaviours, and investigating the factors that moderate these relationships. In particular, greater research into the role that wider societal norms play in moderating youth's involvement in civic activities may be advantageous (Lucia et al., 2015). Additionally, research may benefit from further exploring how youth's civic knowledge or perceptions of their opportunities and abilities to meaningfully engage in the civic domain impact or moderate their engagement in different types of civic action (See Chaskin, McGregor & Brady, 2018; Diemer & Li, 2011; Hope & Jagers, 2014; Pontes, Henn & Griffiths, 2019; Silke et al., 2018; Stadelmann-Steffen & Sulzer 2018).

This study also found that youth's civic values and behaviours are significantly linked to their experiences within the parent, peer, school and community domains, lending further support to a growing international research base which suggests that youth's civic engagement is impacted by their social experiences and relationships (Lenzi et al., 2013; Rossi et al., 2016; Wilkenfield et al., 2010). These findings are among the first to provide insight into the socialisation of civic engagement among youth in Ireland, with results indicating that Irish youth's civic values and behaviours may be uniquely affected by their different social contexts. For example, while parents' encouragement of social values was significantly linked to higher social responsibility and altruistic intentions among young people, it appeared to have no relationship with youth's actual civic behaviour. Conversely, parent civic engagement was found to be the strongest predictor of youth civic action. Hence, these results may suggest that there are differences between the type of factors that influence youth's civic values and those that impact their civic behaviours. This observation is in line with other theoretical and empirical evidence, which suggests that civic values and behaviours can be imparted to youth through different socialisation practices (Bandura, 1986; White & Mistry, 2016). For instance, research by White and Mistry (2016) highlighted key differences between how parental communication of civic values and parental modelling of civic behaviour impacted children's civic beliefs and behaviours. Nevertheless, greater understanding of why youth's civic values and behaviours are linked to different contextual factors is still needed and is an important avenue for future research.

Furthermore, although this research observed a number of significant associations between youth's social contexts and their civic engagement, it is important to acknowledge that several aspects of youths' parental, peer, school and community contexts were not linked to youth's civic outcomes. For instance, while greater civic education in school and feelings of community connectedness were associated with greater (offline) civic action, no

significant associations were found for any other aspect of youth's school or community contexts. Similarly, while positive associations between prosocial friend norms and youth's social responsibility values were observed, no significant links with other peer indicators were found. It is important to acknowledge these non-significant patterns, as they conflict with findings reported in other international research (Lenzi et al., 2013; Wray-Lake et al., 2016). Thus it is possible that the current results highlight patterns of associations that are unique to the Irish cultural context.

Findings from the current study also highlighted notable differences in the expression of youth's online and offline civic behaviours. Specifically, while youth's offline civic behaviours were significantly linked to their school, community and parental contexts, youth's online civic engagement was not found to be associated with any aspect of these social contexts. Notably, previous research has suggested that youth's engagement in online and offline civic activism may be motivated by different contextual factors (Barrett & Zani, 2014; Milosevic-Dordevis & Zazelj, 2017; Šerek & Machackova 2015). For example, research by Cicognani et al. (2016) indicated that while parental norms were linked to youth's offline civic engagement, they exerted no significant impact on youth's online civic activism. Similarly, Jugert et al. (2013) observed that while parental and peer norms were significantly associated with youth's offline civic behaviour, they did not predict their online civic engagement. Thus, the current results are important as they add growing evidence to suggest that youth's offline and online civic engagement may be associated different contextual predictors and further highlight the importance of investigating both forms of youth civic engagement. Although researchers have proposed that the more anonymous nature of online participation may reduce the impact that certain contextual norms or influences exert on youth's behaviour (Jugert et al., 2013), further research is needed to

generate greater understanding about why youth's online and offline civic behaviours may be associated with different social correlates (Cicognani et al., 2016).

Finally, it is important to discuss the role played by youth's age and gender. In particular, although other research indicates that girls and older adolescents typically show greater civic engagement, limited age and gender effects were observed within the current study (Jugert et al., 2013; Kumru et al., 2012). Specifically, findings from the current study indicated that older adolescents showed significantly lower levels of offline civic behaviour than younger adolescents, which is opposite to the trend typically reported in the literature, while girls were found to report significantly higher altruistic intentions than boys. In relation to these findings it is important to note, however, that a number of researchers have provided evidence to suggest that gender and age effects may vary depending on the type of prosocial or civic behaviour being assessed (Eberly-Lewis & Coetzee, 2015; Perenc, Radochoński & Radochoński, 2015). Hence, future research may benefit from further assessing age and gender differences in a variety of offline and online civic activities.

There are a number of potential limitations to this study which are important to discuss. First, although the research provides novel insights into youth civic participation within an Irish setting, it is important to acknowledge that the sample size is relatively small and that the lack of diversity in the recruited sample may impede the generalisation of findings to other age or cultural groups. It should also be noted that the current research focused on assessing the link between a number of key social contexts and youth's civic engagement. However, it is possible that youth's civic participation may also be related to other contextual factors or individual processes, which are not measured in this research. Future research may benefit from examining both direct and indirect relationships between other social/individual factors and youth's civic participation levels. Additionally, the current research relied on the use of youth-report instruments and, as such, the measures employed

here are only reflective of youth's perceptions of their social context (e.g. youth perceptions of parental behaviour). Future research may benefit from including multi-informant perspectives. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the current research is cross-sectional in nature and assumptions about the direction of effects cannot be made (Levin, 2006). Further experimental or longitudinal research in this area may be warranted to augment the current research findings and increase the generalisability of results.

Conclusions

This small scale study provides a number of insights into the civic behaviours and values expressed by youth in Ireland and increases understanding about the relationship between youth's proximal social contexts and their civic engagement levels. Findings indicate that youth report high levels of social responsibility values but low engagement in both online and offline civic engagement. Youths' social responsibility values, future altruistic intentions, and (offline) civic behaviours are substantially influenced by aspects of their parent, peer, school and/or community contexts. However, youth's online civic behaviours do not appear to be connected to these social environments. Overall, this research points to key differences in the socialisation of civic values and behaviours among young people in Ireland and highlights the importance of investigating the link between the social context and different forms of youth civic involvement.

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Table 1*Descriptive Statistics, Reliability and Normal Distributions*

Factor	M	SD	Possible Range	Attained Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
Family Democratic Climate	16.38	3.03	4-20	4-20	-1.14	1.50
Parent Social Responsibility	30.93	4.05	7-35	15-35	-1.28	1.59
Parent Civic Engagement	8.73	3.25	3-15	3-15	0.21	-0.73
Prosocial Friend Norms	22.68	4.59	6-30	8-30	-0.49	-0.05
Peer Connectedness	34.38	4.74	8-40	17-40	-0.80	0.13
School Engagement	20.09	2.84	6-24	11-24	-0.78	0.36
Social Analysis	15.19	3.14	4-20	5-20	-0.47	-0.05
Perspective Taking Opportunities	10.08	2.75	3-15	3-15	-0.24	-0.57
Open Classroom Climate	14.97	3.62	4-20	4-20	-0.60	0.02
Neighbourhood Opportunities	14.92	3.55	4-20	5-20	-0.69	0.24
Community Connectedness	31.08	5.09	8-40	17-40	-0.28	-0.49
Intergenerational Closure	20.32	3.45	5-25	10-25	-0.55	-0.26
Youth Social Responsibility	25.54	3.81	6-30	9-30	-0.85	0.88
Current Civic Behaviours	24.75	6.43	9-45	12-43	0.32	-0.16
Online Civic Engagement	10.45	4.65	5-25	5-25	1.00	0.67
Future Altruistic Intentions	21.44	4.68	6-30	6-30	-0.51	0.19

Table 2

Summary of Inter-Correlations between Parental, Peer, School & Community Factors and Civic Outcomes

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Family Democratic Climate	1														
2. Parent Social Responsibility	.46**	1													
3. Parent Civic Engagement	.20**	.26**	1												
4. Prosocial Norms	.33**	.25**	.23**	1											
5. School Engagement	.46**	.27**	.32**	.42**	1										
6. Peer Connectedness	.41**	.39**	.22**	.38**	.38**	1									
7. Social Analysis	.32**	.26**	.13	.29**	.39**	.32**	1								
8. PT Opportunities	.25**	.23**	.06	.29**	.32**	.31**	.58**	1							
9. Classroom Climate	.40**	.27**	.07	.36**	.39**	.36**	.51**	.50**	1						
10. Neighbourhood Opportunities	.25**	.30**	.23**	.23**	.24**	.34**	.36**	.27**	.36**	1					
11. Community Connectedness	.42**	.43**	.33**	.39**	.45**	.41**	.41**	.36**	.48**	.49**	1				
12. Intergenerational Closure	.26**	.27**	.30**	.32**	.33**	.29**	.45**	.36**	.39**	.42**	.63**	1			
13. Social Responsibility Values	.32**	.41**	.24**	.39**	.25**	.23**	.22**	.18*	.27**	.18*	.26**	.13	1		
14. Current Civic Behaviour	.23**	.22**	.45**	.21**	.24**	.27**	.30**	.20**	.18*	.28**	.41**	.32*	.24**	1	
15. Online Civic Engagement	-.08	-.05	.05	.04	-.11	.01	-.06	-.03	-.08	-.01	-.03	-.12	.14	.25**	1
16. Future Civic Intentions	.18*	.29**	.16*	.29**	.25**	.12	.21**	.18*	.18*	.08	.20**	.12	.54**	.18*	.20*

*Note: *p < .05, **p < .001*

Table 3*Summary of results for the overall model of predictors on each Criterion measure*

	R²	Adjusted R²	F Value
Youth Social Responsibility	.27	.20	3.91**
Online Civic Engagement	.10	.01	1.15
Offline Civic Behaviours	.38	.32	6.65**
Future Altruistic Intentions	.20	.12	2.65*

*Note: * p < .05, ** p < .00*

Table 4*Summary of Standardised (β) and Unstandardized (B) Estimates & Standard Errors (SE)*

Outcome	Predictors	β	B	SE
Youth Social Responsibility	<i>Age</i>	-.004	-.03	.55
	<i>Gender</i>	.13	.96	.56
	<i>Family Democratic Climate</i>	.18	.20	.12
	<i>Parent Social Responsibility</i>	.26**	.24	.08
	<i>Parent Civic Engagement</i>	.16*	.19	.08
	<i>Friend Prosocial Norms</i>	.22*	.18	.07
	<i>Quality Friendship</i>	-.06	-.08	.13
	<i>School Engagement</i>	-.02	-.03	.12
	<i>Peer Connectedness</i>	-.09	-.07	.07
	<i>Social Analysis</i>	.007	.008	.12
	<i>PT Opportunities</i>	.002	.003	.13
	<i>Classroom Climate</i>	.13	.14	.10
	<i>Neighbourhood Opportunities</i>	.03	.03	.09
	<i>Community Connectedness</i>	-.10	-.07	.08
<i>Intergenerational Closure</i>	-.11	-.12	.11	
Current Civic Behaviour	<i>Age</i>	-.18**	-2.27	.85
	<i>Gender</i>	-.13	-1.59	.86
	<i>Family Democratic Climate</i>	.01	.02	.18
	<i>Parent Social Responsibility</i>	-.06	-.09	.13
	<i>Parent Civic Engagement</i>	.38***	.76	.14
	<i>Friend Prosocial Norms</i>	.03	.05	.12
	<i>Quality Friendship</i>	-.09	-.23	.20
	<i>School Engagement</i>	-.05	-.12	.19
	<i>Peer Connectedness</i>	.08	.11	.11
	<i>Social Analysis</i>	.21*	.43	.18
	<i>PT Opportunities</i>	.03	.06	.20
	<i>Classroom Climate</i>	-.07	-.13	.15
	<i>Neighbourhood Opportunities</i>	.01	.02	.14
	<i>Community Connectedness</i>	.24*	.30	.13
<i>Intergenerational Closure</i>	-.01	-.02	.16	
Future Altruistic Intentions	<i>Age</i>	-.08	-.71	.71
	<i>Gender</i>	.18*	1.60	.72
	<i>Family Democratic Climate</i>	.02	.03	.15
	<i>Parent Social Responsibility</i>	.18*	.21	.11
	<i>Parent Civic Engagement</i>	.09	.12	.12
	<i>Friend Prosocial Norms</i>	.12	.13	.10
	<i>Quality Friendship</i>	-.03	-.06	.16
	<i>School Engagement</i>	.15	.24	.16

Outcome	Predictors	B	B	SE
Online Civic Engagement	<i>Peer Connectedness</i>	-.12	-.12	.09
	<i>Social Analysis</i>	.09	.13	.15
	<i>PT Opportunities</i>	.02	.03	.17
	<i>Classroom Climate</i>	.09	.12	.13
	<i>Neighbourhood Opportunities</i>	-.07	-.09	.12
	<i>Community Connectedness</i>	-.02	-.02	.10
	<i>Intergenerational Closure</i>	-.06	-.08	.14
	<i>Age</i>	-.11	-1.05	.71
	<i>Gender</i>	-.05	-.47	.72
	<i>Family Democratic Climate</i>	-.15	-.24	.16
	<i>Parent Social Responsibility</i>	-.07	-.08	.11
	<i>Parent Civic Engagement</i>	.15	.22	.13
	<i>Friend Prosocial Norms</i>	.12	.12	.10
	<i>Quality Friendship</i>	.003	.01	.17
	<i>School Engagement</i>	-.12	-.20	.16
	<i>Peer Connectedness</i>	.10	.10	.10
	<i>Social Analysis</i>	.07	.11	.16
	<i>PT Opportunities</i>	.03	.04	.18
	<i>Classroom Climate</i>	-.08	-.11	.13
	<i>Neighbourhood Opportunities</i>	-.03	-.03	.12
<i>Community Connectedness</i>	.01	.01	.10	
<i>Intergenerational Closure</i>	-.13	-.17	.14	

*Note: * p<.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001*