An examination of young people's relationships with politics and the media in Ireland in 2016

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism & Media Communications, is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

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<u>Abstract</u>

Rachel Carey: An examination of young people's relationship with politics and the media in Ireland in 2016.

Under the supervision of Brian Maye.

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine what type of relationship young Irish people had with both politics and the media in Ireland in 2016. Particular emphasis was placed on engagement between young people and politics and the role the media also plays in this engagement. The traditional opinion of this relationship, as suggested by the literature, claimed that young people and politics do not engage. The blame for this disengagement was placed on both sides of the relationship. The literature also suggested the media played a role, traditional forms of media and their role as agenda setters and gatekeepers were important factors in explaining why the disengagement had occurred.

The research was conducted through both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to generate a significant amount of data to sufficiently answer the research questions. These questions were: does politics engage with young people? What role do the media play in the engagement between politics and young people? What can be done to improve relationships between young people, politics and the media?

A survey of young people living in Ireland and interviews with representatives from young people involved in politics and the media were all undertaken. Their findings demonstrated that engagement between young people and politics corresponded to the literature and was in fact lacking. The role of the media also corresponded as both the survey and interviews suggested the media needed to do more to engage with young people on a political level. Social media also became a dominant factor in the findings as its role seems to become increasingly popular in both information gathering and engagement, with both politics and the media. Social media was deemed a potential way of engaging and rebuilding the fractured relationship between politics and young people if both politicians and young people do more to engage.

Finally, recommendations were made for further study on the relationships young people have with politics and the media in Ireland. This further study is hoped to educate both sides about the relationship and eventually improve it.

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Chapter One: Introduction

"I'm tired of middle-aged men pissing away my future all the time"

Then Young Green Party chair Lorna Bogue made this statement when being interviewed by *The Journal* in March 2015. (O'Connell, 2015). It was the first time the researcher had noticed young people involved in politics being interviewed and spoken about independently of their main political parties in the mainstream media. Although many of the comments following the publication of the article suggested Bogue was being ageist and sexist in her view it became apparent that the opinion she held was not unique. Young people had become disillusioned with politics.

This suggestion of disillusionment was juxtaposed by the marriage equality referendum in Ireland which occurred in May 2015. A record number of young voters registered to vote and subsequently turned out to vote; the Department of Education confirmed that an extra 65,911 people registered to vote before the referendum on 22nd May. (Ryan, 2015). Campaigns through social media also encouraged young Irish people to vote, for example "Make Grá the Law". These campaigns, which focused primarily both online and on social media, continued for the 2016 Irish general election, for example "#MakeASmartVote", both campaigns were led by the Union of Students in Ireland. Before the 2016 general election; media across Ireland showed photos of people queuing outside Garda stations registering to vote before the registration deadline. The youth led success of the marriage equality referendum suggested that young people were becoming more engaged with politics; mainstream media also suggested this. Conall Ó Fátharta wrote for the *Irish Examiner* in February 2016 stating Ireland's youth are more "politically engaged than ever" citing the marriage equality referendum as a reason for this. While statistics regarding youth turnout in the 2016 general election have not yet been released, the youth engagement and voter turnout was not as high as expected.

This led to the researcher wanting to understand what was the relationship young people had with politics and the media in Ireland in 2016. This research put a focus on engagement between young people and politics and the role the media plays in this. In order to achieve this it was necessary to introduce research questions which would help to further understand the relationships. These questions were: Does politics engage with young people? What role do the media play in the engagement between politics and young

people? What can be done to improve relationships between young people, politics and the media?

For the purpose of this research an age bracket needed to be introduced. The age bracket used for the purpose of this research was 18 years to 30 years. The United Nations defined youth as "those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years". (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2016). This provided the researcher with a basic idea of the definition of young people. Adjustments were made to connect the UN definition of youth with the type of research being conducted. Given that in Ireland only people aged 18 and over can vote the decision was made to adjust the starting age for the research to 18. As the age bracket 18-24 is quite limited the decision was then made increase the cut off point to 30 years old.

It is hoped that through an examination of the existing literature and the implementation of both qualitative and quantitative research methods to generate original data a deeper understanding of the relationships young people have with politics and the media in Ireland in 2016 can be reached. These quantitative and qualitative approaches involve the implementation of a survey of young Irish people and multiple interviews with both young people involved in politics and representatives from the Irish media. This research therefore will be composed of five further chapters. Chapter two will examine the existing literature, chapter three will discuss the methodology implemented for the purpose of this research, chapter four will report the findings of the research, chapter five will analyse these findings and finally, chapter six will draw conclusions from these findings and make recommendations for further study in the area.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

Although there is no literature discussing young Irish people and their engagement with politics through the media, a report from a survey conducted by the Foundation for European Progressive Studies entitled '*The Millennial Dialogue Report'* was released during the researchers research period. The report details young Irish people's opinions and attitudes towards Irish politics. Despite the lack of in-depth Irish literature an abundance of literature can be found discussing both youth engagement with politics and how politicians use the media to engage with the public. For the purpose of understanding the research questions, it will be imperative to analyse both sets of literature and their impact. Therefore, the literature review is divided into four sections: 1.2 will look at youth engagement, 1.3 will look at Irish youth engagement, 1.4 will look at how politicians use the media and 1.5 will look at the impact of the changes in political communication and engagement, focusing primarily on the theories of agenda setting and gatekeeping.

2.2 Youth Engagement

Traditional view that young people do not engage with politics

Pippa Norris states that, "Political disengagement is thought to affect all citizens but young people are believed to be particularly disillusioned about the major institutions of representative democracy, leaving them apathetic (at best) or alienated (at worst)". (Norris, 2). This idea that young people are apathetic towards and even alienated from politics extends throughout the literature as many academics discuss youth being disengaged from politics. As stated by Manning, "More than a decade of social research has contributed to a powerful discourse of youth apathy". (Manning, 487).

Some academics view this apathy and disengagement as a crisis. Henderson (2014) discusses this perceived crisis as young people's declining interest in the political process and their low levels of knowledge and poor opinion of politicians. Henderson also goes on to state that this crisis is something being discussed at academic, political and broadcast levels. (Henderson, 2014). Although, Henderson's study takes place in Britain, it is clear that the idea of this crisis is not exclusive to Britain. In a study of political engagement of young people in both the United States and Europe, this idea is also present, as discussed in James

Sloam's article; this decline in participation in the traditional forms of politics has been viewed as a crisis in citizenship and has become a central theme for both academics and policy makers. (Macedo, Alex-Assensoh & Berry, 2005; Sloam, 2014; Stoker, 2006). It can be suggested that this disengagement is being promoted by the different media habits of young people; they are less likely to read a daily newspaper or tune into the daily evening news when compared to their older counterparts, and it is mostly through these traditional media outlets that information about politics and politicians is relayed. (Baumgartner and Morris, 2010). It is the introduction of online media which suggests that this perceived crisis is exaggerated. As Xenos and Foot state, "It is commonplace to refer to the crisis of youth disengagement from politics, but it is clear that in both the online environment in general and the world of politics and public affairs on the Web in particular, the youth cohort is active and vibrant". (Xenos and Foot, 54). This engagement of youth online will be discussed later.

This apathy and disengagement can be attributed to a number of different things, as academics have done throughout the literature. Sloam (2014) attributes this disengagement to a number of factors, including low levels of trust in political institutions and growing cynicism about politics in the media. Sloam states that as a group, young people have become increasingly marginalised from politics. Sloam (2008) also discusses the tough environment of the aftermath of the global financial crisis, with austerity, public-spending cuts and a hostile job market, as factors as to why young people do not engage. Lance Bennett also discusses why young people have become disengaged stating that politics has gone so far as to become a "dirty word". (Lance Bennett, 1). Lance Bennett also suggests that the government has excluded young people and he discusses the idea of engaging as both a challenging and daunting prospect, (Lance Bennett, 2008). Finally, Lance Bennett believes that the pathways to disconnection are many, including candidates seldom appealing to young voters on their own terms about their concerns, adults having frequently negative opinions about politics and young people seeing the media as filled with inauthentic performances from officials who are staged by professional communication managers. (Lance Bennett, 2008).

In a recent study conducted by Lesley Henderson to analyse the relationship between young people in Britain and political reporting on UK television, Henderson found a complete lack of engagement. (Henderson, 2014). She found that the young people she interviewed saw a

divide between politics and everyday life, this was emphasised by the absence of younger voices in both the media and politics. The depiction of youth in political reporting was often negative, referring to ASBOs or "hoodies" while the positive stories were mostly "fluffy", referring to exam results. (Henderson, 2014). Journalists who were interview by Henderson recognised this misrepresentation but did not see it as problematic, as the representations were inevitable and in keeping with the news agenda of ephebiphobia (a fear of young people). (Henderson, 2014).

In an article for *The* Telegraph psychologist Tanya Byron explains an ephebiphobic society as one "that views young people in negative and judgmental terms". (Byron, 2009). As cited in an article by David L. Atheide this idea of ephebiphobia is referred to by social scientist Mike Males as "the latest instalment of a history of bogus moral panics targeting unpopular subgroups to obscure an unsettling reality". (Atheide, 90). Byron also referred to ephebiphobia as one of the most enduring phenomena in our society and that it was now "more prevalent than ever". (Byron, 2009). This phenomenon is encouraged by a predominance of violent and aggressive images featuring young people. (Henderson, 2014). Byron also explains how this fear, exacerbated by the media who Byron claims take great pleasure in doing so, results in the public adopting techniques to dispel young people; "the media report (with barely disguised glee) the latest hideous crimes and abuses of our young, which invents devices such as the Mosquito (which emits a high-frequency sound painful to the young) to move pestilent youths along". (Byron, 2009). While Byron and Henderson discuss ephebiphobia in terms of the United Kingdom and Males discusses it in terms of the United States of America it is not confined to these two countries. Research in other countries has shown similar prevailing conversations concerning youth crime and the potential for media to contribute to that social construction of youth crime. (Faucher, 2009).

Although the idea of ephebiphobia can be present in the media of some countries around the world, Baumgartner and Morris state that, "Today's young adults are not necessarily shiftless, hapless, self-indulgent narcissists; they do seem to care about others and their community. However, this concern apparently does not extend to politics." (Baumgartner and Morris, 25). This belief, that young adults do care about others and their community, suggests that if approached properly, young people would become engaged with politics and the world around them.

How to get youth to engage

While the literature states that there is disengagement between young people and politics, it also suggests ways in which engagement can be encouraged. Manning (2014) discusses the importance of family and friends in sustaining political commitments. Flanagan (2009) suggests that an individual is more responsive to politics as they begin their transition into adulthood and begin to take stock of themselves and their society. This literature suggests the time and circumstances in which young people are more likely to become politically engaged.

Other academics suggest external factors which need to be in place for political engagement. Lance Bennett (2008) looks towards the education system as a reason why young people don't engage. He suggests that civic education has been withered away in school and there this little to no opportunity for young people to embrace and communicate about politics on their own terms. (Lance Bennett, 2008). This has resulted in little connection between academic presentation of politics and the acquisition of skills which would help young people engage. (Lance Bennett, 2008).

Xenos and Foot (2008) look towards politicians themselves as facilitators in engaging young people. Politicians and actors central to the world of electoral politics need to offer young people content and features that will resonate with the information-seeking and sharing modes of online youth. (Xenos and Foot, 2008). This inclusion of content online, away from traditional media, will resonate with young people and will have the potential to be effective as it is getting information to the place where young people are.

Finally, there is a need for improvement of the online presence of politicians in order to engage young people. Mossberger (2009) states young people are more likely to engage online. Therefore it is hoped that the greater number of young people engaging with politics online will increase the participation of young people. To ensure this increased engagement, there is a need for better online sites. (Lance Bennett, et. al., 2012). When writing in 2008, Lance Bennett stated that youth sites were underdeveloped and less social, something which did not engage young people. He states that for them to engage they need to feel comfortable and for the engagement to be on their own terms. (Lance Bennett, 2008). Ultimately, young people want to be able to engage through user-controlled websites as

they are the most favoured aspect of the medium for young people online. (Xenos and Foot, 2008).

Youth Engagement Online

As Xenos and Foot (2008) state, online is now the preferred medium through which young people want to receive their information, be it political or not. Online and the internet have the potential to reinvigorate political community and democratic life, leading to increased political engagement and an unprecedented potential to reach the young. (Brundidge and Rice, 2009). The internet also has the ability to engage with those who wouldn't traditionally engage with politics, i.e. young people. (Mossberger, 2009). This increased engagement would most likely increase the likelihood of voting amongst those engaged online. (Mossberger, 2009). As Mossberger states, "Research has established a positive association between internet use and participation, including voter turnout". (Mossberger, 175). This positive association could encourage others to engage and young people could lead other non-engaged youth online. (Xenos and Foot, 2008). While this potential is recognised, Brundidge and Rice (2009) also recognise that other observers have been sceptical about this, stating that the use of politics online will only reinforce established patterns of communication and widen the knowledge gap and divide.

In discussing the relationship between communication and engagement online, Lance Bennett et al. (2012) introduce the terms "dutiful citizenship" and "actualizing citizenship". These two terms are differentiated through the way in which their users connect to politics. Dutiful citizenship is centred on a sense of responsibility to become informed and channel preferences to government through parties and interest groups. (Lance Bennett et al., 2012). Actualizing citizenship emphasises new repertoires of political action based on personal expression through social networks often using digital media. (Lance Bennett et al., 2012). Actualizing citizens receive most of their information online and by 2008 the internet had nearly eclipsed both newspaper and television as the main source of news for young people. (Lance Bennett et al., 2012). This would suggest that young people more commonly fall into the bracket of actualizing citizens. This is emphasised by the discussion that young actualizing citizens play a more active role in selecting, engaging, organising and acting with civic information. (Lance Bennett et al., 2012). This is common practice among young people online and will be discussed later in this chapter. Lance Bennett et al. (2012) suggests that by

conventional dutiful-citizenship standards, young people seem disengaged, but by emerging actualizing-citizenship criteria such as peer-knowledge sharing, participatory-content creation and inventing alternative forms of political action, those young people active online in these areas seem engaged and even changing the definition of citizen engagement.

The potential the internet has to engage with young people can be seen on social-media sites. There is a belief that social-media sites will spur a democratic revolution but Baumgartner and Morris (2010) believe this to be overstated. Despite this, social-media sites do hold the potential to increase engagement amongst young people, although their full potential have not yet been realised. (Baumgartner and Morris 2010). Young people seek out views on social-media sites that correspond to their own, meaning that their likelihood of engagement is decreased. (Baumgartner and Morris 2010).

Despite social media not yet being fully utilised, the expansion of youth-orientated political portals has already taken place in recent years, with Xenos and Foot (54) describing it as an "explosion". These sites relate to specific campaigns and elections and also are devoted to broader public and social concerns. (Xenos and Foot, 2008). These websites and movements are also present in Ireland, most notably through various campaigns run by the Union of Students in Ireland (USI).

Although currently growing and developing online, the way in which young people use online tools to engage with politics will ultimately change, as young people persist in changing the way they communicate the norms and structures connecting them to the political process will also change. (Lance Bennett et. al., 2012).

2.3 Irish Youth Engagement

Following the 2011 Irish general election the Central Statistics Office released information regarding "voter participation and abstention" gathered through the quarterly national household survey. (Central Statistics Office, 2011). The findings reported that voter turnout of younger people, aged between 18 and 24 had increased by 12% from the 2002 survey, with 62% of those surveyed voting in the 2011 general election. (Central Statistics Office, 2011). The findings also demonstrated an increase in the amount of students voting, 71% of students surveyed voted in 2011 compared to 52% in 2002. (Central Statistics Office, 2011). Despite this apparent increase in engagement youth disengagement was also demonstrated.

In the youngest age category, 45% of non-voters were not registered to vote; this is compared to just 13% of those aged 55 and over. (Central Statistics Office, 2011). Of the percentage of those aged 18-34, 21% in total cited a lack of interest in politics, disillusionment with politics and a lack of knowledge or information about politics as their reasons for not voting in the 2011 general election. (Central Statistics Office, 2011).

Although these statistics offer some insight, there is a lack of literature available which discusses the Irish experience of youth engagement with politics and the media. Sloam (2016) states this as he includes Ireland as he says "there is very little work on the variations in participatory practices between young people in different countries and the relative popularity of different modes of participation among younger citizens". (Sloam, 524). He goes on to state that his own study attempts to address this imbalance. (Sloam, 2016).

Sloam (2016) discusses the levels of political participation among young people in the European Union. Sloam states that "the sheer diversity of Generation Y, in terms of identity, values and interests, has made it harder for young people to express themselves through electoral parties (still largely structured by catch-all parties that reflect old industrial cleavages)". (Sloam, 523). Using the source of the European Social Survey cumulative data, Wave 1-5 (2002-2010) Sloam demonstrates that across the EU15 Ireland ranks fourth lowest in youth participation in five political activities. (Sloam, 2016). The list of activities include, "vote in national election", "display badge/sticker", "sign petition", "join boycott" and "participate in demonstration". (Sloam, 526). Sloam also finds that, in Ireland, engagement is electoral politics is "very low" and engagement in issue-based political activities in "moderate". (Sloam, 529).

The reasons for this low level of engagement are also suggested by Sloam. He believes factors including "socio-economic circumstances (including high level of income inequality and youth unemployment)"and "a weak culture of civic and political engagement" contribute to the low level of engagement. This argument is in keeping with Sloam's earlier discussion about the reasons for youth disengagement from 2008. This demonstrates that between 2008 and 2016 the same factors are still in play when explaining why there is such low engagement between young people and politics. In order to improve this Sloam suggests "we need to be much more precise about what we are looking at in the field of political participation: the country involved and the mode of participation". (Sloam, 534).

The *Millennial Dialogue Report – Ireland*

Through *Audience Net* the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) conducted an initial online survey of 1001 15-34 year old residents in Ireland. They then developed an online dialogue with 40 Irish Millennials, a sample which was designed to be representative of all Irish Millennials. *Audience Net* define the Millennial generation as those "born since 1980". (Audience Net, 2016). The Foundation of European Progressive Studies state the term Millennial has gained a "special currency among the commentariat of the democratic world". (Foundation of European Progressive Studies, 2016). "At once a trope for 21st century disengagement, a stereotype for the generation that came of age with the new millennium and an aspirational moniker for the evangelists of the rapidly changing tech economy, 'Generation Y', as the alternative name goes, is a much-discussed but little-understood cohort." (Foundation of European Progressive Studies, 2016). They also state that Millennials often emerge as the more extreme example of the belief that the general public has turned away from party politics as traditionally conceived. (Foundation of European Progressive Studies, 2016). The results from their report also demonstrate this.

From a list of 15 things Irish Millennials were interested in, politics came 14th. (Foundation of European Progressive Studies, 2016). While taking an interest in politics was ranked 17th in order of importance. (Foundation of European Progressive Studies, 2016). Only 5% of those surveyed took part in political meetings and 12% took part in protests or demonstrations. (Foundation of European Progressive Studies, 2016). Of those surveyed 50% thought "very few, if any, politicians encourage young people to get involved in politics". (Foundation of European Progressive Studies, 2016). When asked if they agreed with the statement, politicians ignore the views of young people, 73% of Irish Millennials agreed. (Foundation of European Progressive Studies, 2016). While only 175 agreed that most politicians want the best future for young people. (Foundation of European Progressive Studies, 2016). Finally, when discussing voting, the five key reasons for not wanting to vote were listed as follows:

1. Lack of trust in politicians
2. They are not interested in politics
3. They don't think they know enough about politics
4. They think all politicians and parties are the same

5. They don't support the current political system. (Foundation of European Progressive Studies, 2016).

The two key factors which may encourage an interest in voting were listed as, number one "if I trusted politicians more" and number two "if I could vote online". (Foundation of European Progressive Studies, 2016).

The findings of this report demonstrate that the lack of engagement between young people and politics, as discussed above by academics including Norris (2003) and Henderson (2014), is apparent in Ireland among the Millennial generation. The report also seeks to understand the reason for this disengagement. This reason, again, are in keeping with the literature already discussed including Sloam's (2014) belief that the low level of engagement in politics from young people comes from a lack of trust in the political system. This belief is confirmed by the findings of the *Millennial Dialogue Report.*

2.4 How Politicians use the Media

Irish politicians' use of media through the decades

According to Ó Beacháin (2014), how citizens are motivated to mobilise depends on the quality and quantity of political communication with the electorate; it is influenced, if not determined, by the character of the election campaign. The influence television has had on Irish election campaigns cannot be underestimated. Its introduction in 1961 brought new challenges for those seeking election, while the 1965 election was the first campaign to receive election coverage. (Ó Beacháin 2014). The 2016 general-election campaign saw multiple television debates; campaign videos and discussions take place. However, despite becoming an integral part of election campaigns, securing large audiences and attracting extensive media analyses, TV debates have never become the game changers that many believed they would be. (Ó Beacháin 2014).These technological advances have ensured that the way in which politicians communicate with the electorate has evolved over the decades. (Ó Beacháin 2014).

The influence of this new media on the electorate can be seen throughout the election campaigns over the years. Ó Beacháin (2014) looks towards the discussion of polls in the traditional media to show this. Candidates and parties can become victim to poll results,

whether they are good or bad, as polls not only reflect but have also come to greatly influence what people think and how they will vote.

It is only in recent years, as Ó Beacháin (2014) suggests, that Irish politicians have gotten to grips with engaging with the electorate through the media. Ireland had to wait until the 1980s for election debates to be broadcast on national television. (Ó Beacháin, 2014). This engagement with the media can be seen to influence whether or not people choose to engage with politics; this refers to the engagement of young people also. Although television is a core communication tool for political parties, it is clear that in recent years Facebook and Twitter and other social-networking sites have become core communication platforms for politicians and their parties to use. (Ó Beacháin, 2014). This statement by Ó Beacháin can be seen as being directly related to young people because, as discussed earlier, social-networking sites and online sites are the places where young people receive most of their news and information.

Irish politicians and social media

Throughout the literature discussing politicians and social media, Barack Obama's 2008 election campaign is regarded as one of the first where social media and the internet are highly used, resulting in what is referred to as an internet election victory. (Molony, 2014). Obama has become the first internet president and there is widespread agreement amongst political commentators and digital-media experts that his campaign and use of the internet demonstrate that how politicians and the public interact would never be the same again. (Molony, 2014). His campaign is claimed to have fully embraced social media, resulting in "the open and unfettered public involvement allowed by campaign communication". (Lilleker and Jackson, 246). Other academics argue that the campaign simply normalised the use of digital media in political campaigning for countries outside the United States rather than acting as a tipping point. (Graham, Jackson and Broersma, 2016).

The 2007 Irish general election was the first election in which the internet was used by candidates and the media, with Web events and citizen journalists publishing useful and popular online commentary about the election. (Molony, 2014). Although used by some candidates, the internet was not embraced with any great fervour by most candidates during the 2007 election as candidates did not regard use of the internet as a vital campaigning tool. (Molony, 2014).

As Molony (2014) discusses, following Obama's internet victory, the Irish general election in 2011 saw a significant increase in the use of internet tools and social media; these were placed alongside traditional media. The main Irish political parties sought advice from the social-media experts working alongside Obama during his campaign in an effort to increase interaction and engagement online, mostly through social-media sites. (Molony, 2014). Evidence of this engagement can be seen, as Molony (2014) discusses, in the levels of Twitter traffic around the hashtags associated with the televised leaders' debates on both RTÉ and TV3 and also the general hashtag for the election, #ge11, used in the final days of the campaign. This high level of Twitter traffic and Facebook traffic can also be seen during the leaders' debates and televised discussions that took place during the 2016 general election. The literature discussing young people's involvement and engagement with social media would suggest that some of this traffic is coming from young people online and is therefore engaging young people in politics.

The idea that politicians use of Twitter increases during televised debates or towards the end of the election campaign is something which can also be seen in politician's use of Twitter in the United Kingdom. Graham *et al,* (2016) suggest politicians across Western democracies are increasingly embracing Twitter particularly during election time. They discuss the use of Twitter by politicians in the United Kingdom during the 2010 election. The most active day of politicians Twitter use corresponds with the final two televised Prime Ministerial debates. (Graham *et al.,* 2016). British candidates were also seen to use Twitter more as a way to broadcast their message rather than as a means of interaction. (Graham *et al.,* 2016). It is suggested that the reason politicians adopt this approach is due to the nature of the media in the United Kingdom, "the United Kingdom press operate in a hyper-competitive environment where political conflict and scandal are particularly newsworthy". (Graham *et al.,* 779). For this reason journalists in the UK are more likely to use Tweets as a source of stories, led by an agenda of blunders and mistakes. (Broersma and Graham, 2012). These findings demonstrate, that despite Barack Obama's internet victory in his presidential election, politicians in both Ireland and the Britain failed to utilise social media and the internet in the same manner.

Molony (2014) states that while social media will not radically change Irish political life, it has the potential to introduce important opportunities for new modes of two-way political communication. For social media to be successful in engaging young people in politics,

Molony (2014) suggests the attitude and tone of communication need to be more personal, acting more as a personal conversation rather than a town-hall meeting. Ó Beacháin (2014) also recommends that politicians become aware of what type of information to publish to what social-media site. For example, Ó Beacháin (2014) suggests that Facebook is more suited to detailed press releases, photos and videos, while Twitter has a more immediate news value. Twitter is also seen as the more politicising social-media site and therefore holds great importance in forthcoming elections. (Ó Beacháin, 2014). In adopting these approaches, both Ó Beacháin (2014) and Molony (2014) believe that the use of social-media sites by politicians and their parties can increase the engagement of the electorate, most notably young voters.

Stated in the *Millennial Dialogue Report* Irish young people consider their view about the leaders of each party was seen as the key factor which contributes to their voting decision. (Foundation for European progressive studies, 2016). Social media and other online factors were fairly low down the list as Millennials expect the main campaigns to take place using traditional media (TV and radio)". (Foundation for European progressive studies, 2016). This opinion is juxtaposed by the result which states if they were to start their own political campaign "Irish millennials would be very likely to focus their efforts on social media". (Foundation for European progressive studies, 2016). This suggests that young people, if they had a choice, would be more comfortable moving political information online, through social media sites rather than depending on traditional media.

Although important in engaging young people, the use of social media by both politicians and traditional media should be approached with caution. Molony (2014) discusses this point through the detailing of the "Tweet-gate" scandal that ultimately destroyed Seán Gallagher's presidential election campaign. Molony (2014) also comments on other times in which politicians have tweeted or Facebooked some inappropriate message which was then later used against them.

While social media has the potential to increase youth engagement, both Molony (2014) and Ó Beacháin (2014) believe that social media and online media will only serve as a complement rather than a replacement for the traditional media.

As both academics discuss the traditional campaigning style of Irish elections remains the most favoured among politicians; personal contact with as many individual voters as

possible is expected not only by the candidates but also by the electorate. (Molony, 2014). In a survey conducted during the 2011 general election, 60% of politicians surveyed maintained door-to-door canvassing and face-to-face communication were the most important means of communication during an election, while 88% believed social media was changing the dynamics of political communication with voters. (cited in Ó Beacháin, 2014).

2.5 Impact of changes in engagement and communication

Gatekeeping

Shoemaker and Vos (2009) describe gatekeeping as the centre of the media's role in modern public life; it is the process of culling and crafting information into the limited number of messages that reach people each day. Singer (2005) described the role of the gatekeeper as "the professional niche as society's primary determiner and provider of information deemed important of interesting enough to convey". (Singer, 177).

According to the literature, this traditional definition of gatekeeping and its integral role in the media are changing as sources and forms of communication develop. Lance Bennett et al. (2012) suggest that information sourced from elite gatekeepers, which they refer to as the news, is becoming less credible while information sourced from the public, for example crowd sourcing and citizen journalism, is becoming more frequently used and distributed. People, especially young people, no longer rely on the traditional forms of communication to receive their news, relying on other sources, and therefore they are no longer subject to the media as a gatekeeper.

Brundidge and Rice (2009) suggest that there is now competition online for the role of the gatekeeper. During the mass-audience era, the political agenda was shaped by a mutual relationship between dominant political acts and mainstream news outlets who acted as the gatekeepers. Now there is a blurring of boundaries between political and entertainment news, which has led to competition within the media for the role of the gatekeepers. No longer do elite groups have control over what is reported in the media. (Brundidge and Rice, 2009). Singer (2005) also agrees with this as she states the internet has challenged virtually all aspects of the journalistic gatekeeping concept, "in the a media environment with unlimited sources of information, the concept of discrete gates through which such information passes is obliterated". (Singer, 178-9). Despite the evolving role online Singer

also correctly states that news consumption both online and offline remains dominated by mainstream outlets, which "retain their role as gatekeepers of what is credible and worthwhile rather than merely available". (Singer, 179).

As the role of the gatekeeper does shift, it allows engagement to improve as information is more open; this is suggested to help engagement with young people. Lance Bennett (2008) also suggests that engagement among young people could be improved by the removal of older gatekeepers who continue to live in a different social, political and media world than the youth. The older gatekeepers will struggle to encourage the creative involvement of young people in politics. (Lance Bennett, 2008). Although Molony (2014) states social media will not radically change political life he also states that is has the potential to introduce new modes of two way political communication. This idea is enhanced through the notion of the evolving role of the gatekeeper. Through the growth of online news and its position on social media, the role of the traditional gatekeeper is evolving; younger people are becoming their own gatekeepers regarding political information, demonstrating control over the information they receive. Young people are also controlling where they receive their information, more frequently social media is being used for this purpose. It is suggested that this change in the role of the gatekeeper may lead to an increase in political engagement.

Agenda setting

As cited in Brundidge and Rice (2009), both Bimber and McCombs et al. associate political participation with agenda setting. The basic idea of agenda setting studies is "that the salience of issues on the media agenda influenced the salience of issues on the public agenda, that is, in the minds of voters". (Hopman *et al,* 2012). As the media influence which political issues are treated as important and therefore focus the public's attention on these issues, they set up frames and agendas of political discussion and events. (Brundidge and Rice, 2009). Through these methods of agenda setting, the media are influencing whether or not people choose to become involved in politics and engage. (Brundidge and Rice, 2009). Vesa *et* al, discuss the idea of "mediaization" when discussing agenda setting. (Vesa *et al,* 281). This is the long-term process whereby "the news media have become the most important source of political information for citizens". (Vesa *et al,* 281). This idea of mediaization plays an important role in the discussion of agenda setting in the media,

demonstrating the power the news media have over public discourse and the information the public receive.

Political parties themselves can also be deemed to play a role in the agenda setting function of the media. Studies conducted by Brandenburg (2002) demonstrate that the political parties, when in a position of power, can directly affect the media agenda. Brandenburg refers directly to Ireland in this study as he claims when Fianna Fáil was in power they were a dominant force in setting the media agenda. (Brandenburg, 2002).

The agenda-setting function is altered by the internet and becomes complicated in the same way as the gatekeeping function. (Brundidge and Rice, 2009). Young people increasingly have the ability to set their own agenda online through social-media sites this; similar to gatekeeping, alters what they see online and therefore the information they receive is not restricted by agenda setting or gatekeeping.

Agenda setting can also influence the way in which young people are depicted online and therefore reduce their engagement with both the media and politics. This is demonstrated in the study conducted by Lesley Henderson (2014) which saw young people in the United Kingdom being subject to agenda setting in their depiction in the traditional media. The association between young people and crime was seen to always fit into the national news agenda, while focusing on young people negatively was seen amongst journalists to be as a result of news values. (Henderson, 2014). Henderson (2014) also found that broadcast bulletins were often put together by older people who see the world differently from young people and therefore their view of the world is depicted rather than a younger person's view. (Henderson, 2014). Although agenda-setting roles are altering, it still remains clear, from Henderson's study that traditional media are still subject to agenda setting, which restricts the engagement of young people. It suggests that young people must move online to set their own agenda and ultimately become engaged.

Young people as both consumers and producers

As discussed in the *Millennial Dialogue Report* the media play an important role the way in which Millennials become informed and seek to be informed about politics. (Foundation for European progressive studies, 2016). Through the changing ways in which information is being communicated, young people online are provided with more opportunity to personally

shape their information, expression and action environments. (Lance Bennett et al. 2012). This is regarded as an important development in encouraging engagement as it empowers young people and frees them to make their own creative choices. (Lance Bennett, 2008). It is also a development which is being welcomed by young people. This, as suggested above, suggests that the agenda setting and gatekeeping functions of the media are evolving and are no longer accepted by young people as young people seek to become their own gatekeepers and set their own agendas.

As discussed earlier, the way in which young people wish to engage, notably online, is through their own expression. This demonstrates that young people do not wish to only consume information but also produce their own information. By allowing young people to do this, it is thought it will increase engagement.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Overview

As Martyn Denscombe describes in his book *The Good Research Guide* a researcher is faced with a variety of research method options and alternatives and has to make strategic decisions about which to choose. (Denscombe, 2003). In order to investigate the relationship young people have with politics and the media in Ireland it was necessary to undertake a sufficient amount of research. This research was designed to collect and generate the largest amount of information and data possible. To do this two different methods of research were used. A survey was conducted with a targeted audience of young Irish people. A survey was deemed the best way in which to gain a large amount of quantitative data from a sample of young people about their relationship with politics and the media. Those who took part in the survey were used as a representative sample of the youth population in Ireland as a whole. Interviews were also conducted with some of the youngest political candidates from the 2016 Irish General Election, young representatives from Irish political parties and representatives from the Irish media. In total nine interviews were completed. All interviews were individual with the exception of one in which two people were interviewed together. These interviews were conducted as a way in which more in-depth qualitative data could be generated to complement the quantitative data and further aid the researcher in sufficiently answering the research question.

As discussed, in order to gain the most information the research was conducted and analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. By using these two methods together information was generated and validated across the cited literature this is referred to as the triangulation method. (Denscombe, 2014; Mason, 2001; Messenger Davies and Mosdell, 2006; Creswell, 2003) This triangulation approach also acts as another key ingredient to validity in a research design. (Messenger Davies and Mosdell, 2006).

For the purpose of sufficiently answering the research question it was imperative to use this triangulation method of researching using both interviews and a survey. This allowed the researcher to attempt to gain a depth and roundness of understanding in the area, rather than a broad understanding of the surface patterns. (Mason, 2001). Therefore this methodology is divided into three separate sections: 2.2 will look at the survey as a research

method, 2.3 will focus on interviews as a research method and 2.4 will look at the triangulation approach.

3.2 Survey

After much consideration and examination of the different research methods a survey was deemed the most efficient and informative way to gather a clear view about how young people felt politics and the media related to them both during the election and in general. Denscombe (2014) states that surveys have a number of characteristics including offering researchers a snapshot of how things are in real time, providing information on the current state of affairs. They also offer, according to Denscombe, wide and inclusive coverage while allowing the researcher to gain the information which would enable detailed scrutiny on the topic. (Denscombe, 2014). These characteristics apply to the type of information the researcher was seeking to gain.

The intention of conducting a survey was to gather responses from a sample of the wider youth population. A complete census of the wider population would have been impossible and impractical to achieve. (Mason, 2001).

The survey was hosted through the site SurveyMonkey. The survey was also anonymous with respondents only having to disclose their age and gender. Finally the survey was active for a total of two weeks. The list of questions asked in the survey can be found in the Appendices, listed as Appendix 1.

Internet Survey

When deciding to do a survey as one of the research methods it was necessary to decide what type of survey would be used. The internet, including social media websites, is now a part of everyday life to many people, including young people. A market research report issued in August 2015 stated that 1.8 million Irish people use Facebook every day, with the largest demographic being 25-34 year olds which makes up 29% (Kane, 2015), while the highest demographic of Irish people who used Twitter was 15-24 year olds at 53%, with 700,000 people logging on to Twitter every day in Ireland. (Kane, 2015). These statistics show that young Irish people, especially those under the age of 30, use social media sites daily. This confirmed to the researcher that an online survey was the best way to gain enough information to answer the research question.

Denscombe states that due to people's high interaction with the internet every day in developed societies there is little evidence to suggest respondents would provide different kinds of quality of answers as a consequence of the online data collection method. (Denscombe, 2014). Internet surveys also save time, speed up the data processing time and also allow the researcher to gain wide geographical coverage. (Denscombe, 2014). Due to these advantages and the researcher's knowledge of the number of young people on social media websites an internet survey was deemed the best approach to take.

As the main social media website the survey was put online was the researcher's own Facebook page the survey and the sample it created could be known as a convenience sample. (Messenger Davies and Mosdell, 2006). This is when a sample is created of those "handiest to you". (Messenger Davies and Mosdell, 65). Messenger and Davies (2006) also state it is possible to construct a representative sample using this method if the researcher knows what they are doing. As the majority of the researcher's "friends" on Facebook are Irish, varying in political affiliation or interest in politics and are in the age bracket that the research is focusing on a representative sample can be taken from the responses.

Response Rates

"Generally speaking, the aim of a good survey is to achieve a high response rate. The larger the proportion that responds, the better it is for the survey." (Denscombe, 22). As Denscombe explains response rates need to be high in order to gain good feedback. In order to help achieve this numerous measures were put in place. The survey was re-posted numerous times to the researcher's own Facebook page to remind friends to take the survey and also catch the attention of those who did not see the original post. The survey was also shared by a number of different people on Facebook; this meant people who were not "friends" with the researcher could also be reached. This increased the potential response rate as more people became aware of the survey and were capable of completing it.

The survey was also posted to Twitter. The survey was posted numerous times during the period it was active. It was posted along with numerous "hashtags" which would enable the survey to be found by those who did not "follow" the researcher. These hashtags included ones associated with the Irish general election. This again allowed the survey to be seen by more people, potentially increasing the number of people who took the survey.

Finally the survey was left open online for a total of two weeks. This time span was deemed appropriate to allow for as much time as possible for as many people as possible to take the survey and also for enough time to be given to allow the researcher to properly code and understand the findings following the its completion.

Analysing Responses

Quantitative analysis was the main method of analysis used when analysing the responses from the online survey. As discussed by John W. Creswell, in the second edition of his book *Research Design,* a survey "provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population". (Creswell, 153). Although SurveyMonkey coded all of the responses and grouped each question response together the researcher went through each response individually to make sure it was accurate and correct. Time was also taken to ensure that only full survey responses were used in the final figures, meaning that respondents who did not answer all the questions in the survey were not included. The responses to each question were broken down numerically and presented in percentages of the total amount. This allowed responses from the survey to be presented in a clear and concise manner. The responses were also collected at one point in time following the completion of a two week period where the survey was open online; Creswell refers to this method as "cross-sectional". (Creswell, 155).

Qualitative methods were also put in place when analysing survey results. Eight of the 10 survey questions had options in which respondents could add comments along with their response. Some of these were stand alone comment sections and others were answer options entitled "other (please specify)". As most of the comment responses were different they would not be analysed quantitatively as they could not be grouped together to establish a majority. These responses therefore were gathered qualitatively as the researcher interpreted responses and added them to other responses from the interview section of the research. As Creswell discusses qualitative research is often emergent rather than tightly prefigured, as new aspects emerge during the qualitative study. (Creswell, 2003). The responses offered the researcher personal and often more in-depth opinions about the topics being discussed and broadened the information being gathered, helping to answer and understand the answers to the research question.

Challenges

One of the disadvantages and challenges of internet surveys, as Denscombe discusses, is "non-response bias". (Denscombe, 27). Only people who have the internet will be capable of taking the survey. Although a large proportion of the population in developed countries are online there are still demographic differences that exist. (Denscombe, 2014). Denscombe lists these as social class (wealthier people may be more likely to have internet access then poorer groups) and age, elderly people being less likely to have internet access. (Denscombe, 2014). The second of these differences, age, does not apply to this research as the research is focusing solely on a young demographic. The first of these differences is something the researcher had to take into consideration. Although this was a disadvantage the researcher felt confident that the amount of feedback and range of people who would be capable of taking the survey to provide feedback would be beneficial to the researcher rather than not conducting the survey through the internet.

Another of the main issues when conducting a survey is bias in the responses received. Those taking the survey may be biased in certain ways and would not give unbiased and truthful answers. Denscombe suggests that the researcher should "take what practical measures are possible to find out if respondents are different from non-respondents in some way that is relevant to the survey and which might result in non-response bias". (Denscombe, 28). In an attempt to limit biased responses certain questions were added to the survey to allow respondents to be as truthful and unbiased as possible. Respondents were asked if they were a member of a political party or youth wing of a political party. This was asked so the researcher would be aware of the responses from those involved with a political party as they could differ drastically from those who have no party affiliation.

Respondents were also asked to give their age when completing the survey. As the survey was open to anyone who could access it online it was a probability that not only young people in the age bracket set out by the researcher would complete the survey. This was a challenge as the researcher then had to decide if the responses from those outside the research age bracket would be used in the data analysis.

A final challenge posed by a survey is the potentially limited response. Despite the survey being shared and promoted multiple times online, enough respondents may not take the survey. This would cause the survey to lack the sample size which would justify using it as a

representative of the youth population as a whole. Mason (2001) discusses this challenge as she suggests representativeness often requires the construction of very large sample sizes which are both time consuming and costly and in many instances impossible to achieve. The researcher has attempted to deal with this challenge by including interviews in the research process to give more detailed opinions and data.

3.3 Interviews

Interviews were also conducted in an attempt to sufficiently answer the research question. As surveys can only answer a limited number of questions it was deemed necessary to conduct a number of interviews.

It was decided that interviews would take place with the youngest political candidates from the 2016 Irish General Election, young representatives from Irish political parties and representatives from the Irish media. Mason (2001) suggests much of the intellectual work involved in sampling and selection is establishing an appropriate relationship between the sample and the wider universe to which is it to be related. In an effort to achieve this relationship a total of 10 people were interviewed. Eight of these ten people represented young Irish people involved in politics in Ireland with six of the country's main political parties being represented. Two of these represented the country's media.

One of the main hypotheses of the researcher before the research was undertaken was that the majority of young people were not engaged with politics. For this reason the researcher sought to interview young Irish people who were engaged with politics in an effort to understand why they became involved and also what they thought about the relationship between young people, politics and the media. Seven of the youngest candidates for the 2016 Irish General Election were all contacted to take part in the research process. Of this seven, four responded. Ciara Leonardi-Roche was a candidate for Anti Austerity Alliance in Cork East, Claire Kerrane was a candidate for Sinn Fein in Roscommon-Galway, Lorna Bogue was a candidate for the Green Party in Cork South-Central and Cormac Manning was also a candidate for the Green Party in Cork North-West.

As these candidates did not represent the entire spectrum of Irish political parties, representatives from the other main political parties were contacted. It was necessary to the researcher that these representatives were young members of the party preferably in youth

wings of their respective parties in an effort to have their experience of politics and the media as a young person somewhat correspond to those of young candidates. Grace Williams is the current chair of Labour Youth. Patrick Martin is the head of Young Fine Gael in Dublin and Colm O' Rourke is the director of communications also for Young Fine Gael. To represent Fianna Fail Jack Chambers TD was interviewed. This was a conscious decision by the researcher to include someone who could represent a young politician involved in Fianna Fail but also the youngest member of the current Dáil Éireann.

All of the political representatives named above were contacted through either Facebook or by email, addresses of which could be found on their own websites. It was hoped that by interviewing a range of different people with different political affiliation and from different areas of the country it would enable the researcher to gain high quality information about the topic from those who would know the most about it. Attempts were also made to gender balance when selecting interviewees in order to have balanced response.

In order to include representatives from the media many journalists were contacted. An effort was made by the researcher to vary the respondents in terms of online, radio, television and print journalists. Of those contacted only two journalists were available for interview. Hugh O'Connell is currently a political correspondent with the *Sunday Business Post*, during the time of the election was the political editor with the online news website *The Journal*. O'Connell was contacted due to his high levels of engagement with politics through the media and due to him having previously written at length about young people and politics. O'Connell was also able to represent both print and online media given his current and previous roles. Gavin Reilly is currently a political correspondent with *TodayFM*, one of Ireland's national radio stations. Reilly was also contacted due to his high levels of engagement with politics through the media; he was able to represent the radio news media for the purpose of this research. Both journalists were contacted via email; both email addresses were available on their respective Twitter profiles.

Given time constraints and geographical limitations all but three interviews were conducted over the phone. Two were conducted in person and one was conducted via *Facetime*.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Structured, semi-structured and unstructured interview approaches were all taken into consideration when designing the research process and deciding what form the interviews would take.

Both structured and unstructured interviews styles were deemed not fit for the type of research needed to answer the research question.

Structured interviews, according to Denscombe (2014) adopt a more tightly controlled approach, as the researcher was attempting to gain a high level of information including the interviewee's opinions and feelings on the subject this tightly controlled format was deemed not suitable. Using this tightly controlled format would mean the interviewees would not be free to bring up topics or information they feel is applicable to the research being conducted and that the researcher may not have considered.

In unstructured interviews the researcher's role is described as "to be as unintrusive as possible". (Denscombe, 167). This level of freedom in the interview process was not suitable for gathering the type of information needed to answer the research questions. The researcher had a set list of questions which was deemed necessary to ask each interviewee to answer certain aspects of the research questions. By not following a list of questions and allowing the interviewee to speak freely on the topic the interview could run the risk of moving off course and not all aspects of the research questions could be answered. The list of questions the researcher went into each set of interviews with can be found in the Appendices, listed as Appendix 2 (a-d).

As the interview process is attempting to gain the interviewee's thoughts, feelings and opinions on the research topic it was deemed necessary to adopt the semi-structured interview approach. As Denscombe (167) states:

> With semi-structured interviews, the interviewer still has a clear list of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered. However, with the semi-structured interview the interviewer is prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered, and, perhaps more significantly, to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher.

By adopting this approach the researcher is allowing each interviewee to express themselves regarding the topic. It also allows the interviewee to bring up new issues or opinions which the researcher may not have considered and thus allowing the researcher to further question the interviewee on these issues and opinions. Finally it allows each set of interviewees to be asked the same questions; therefore a cohesive response can be gathered from the primary questions asked by the researcher.

The researcher believes that by adopting the semi-structured interview approach the most information was gathered from each interview.

Analysing Responses

In-depth, semi-structured forms of interviewing are known as qualitative interviewing. (Mason, 2001). Burgess (1984) refers to them as "conversations with a purpose". (Burgess, 102). As the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way in order to generate the most information they were all analysed qualitatively.

This qualitative method was chosen due to what Mason (39) describes as the researcher's "ontological" and "epistemological" positions. The ontological position suggests that the researcher believes "that people's knowledge, views, understanding, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality which your research questions are designed to explore". (Mason, 39). The researcher's epistemological position suggests that "a legitimate way to generate data on these ontological properties is to interact with people, to talk to them, to listen to them, and to gain access to their accounts and articulations." (Mason, 30-40).

In the analysis of the data generated from interviews the researcher did not rely heavily on quantifying data instead making analytical comparisons. (Mason, 2001). The point of comparison between all interviewees was somewhat straightforward. All young political candidates and those young people involved in politics were asked some but not all of the same questions. The representatives from the media were also asked some of the same questions and depending on responses were asked secondary questions which did not apply to the other representative. As all interviews were conducted in a qualitative manner there was no set of standardised questions and questions needed to be varied depending on the interviewee.

Challenges

Mason (2001) states that the use of qualitative interviews as a data generation method raises a number of general ethical issues. In order to be aware of some of the ethical issues that could arise, Mason (2001) suggests the researcher be aware of the types of questions they are asking. This includes whether they are of a deeply personal nature. (Mason, 2001). Mason (2001) states there should also be awareness about how the information gathered through the interviews should be stored to guarantee confidentiality and privacy. The researcher dealt with this challenge by asking all interviewees to read information sheets prior to taking part in the research and also sign consent forms. Both the information sheets and the signed consent forms can be found in the Appendices, listed as Appendix 3 (a-c) and Appendix 4 (a-k) respectively. These forms explicitly stated that the names, positions and party affiliations of each interviewee would be published in the research. The research was also explained to each interviewee by the researcher before the interview took place.

In order to maintain the highest standard of ethics during the course of the research only the data which was recorded with the knowledge of the interviewees was used for the purpose of this research. The data was also derived in the literal sense. (Mason, 2001).

One of the main challenges of conducting interviews as part of the research was it provided the researcher with what Creswell describes as "indirect information". (Creswell, 186). This is information filtered though the views of the interviewees. (Creswell, 2003). Although the researcher is attempting to gain opinions and information from each interviewee, their experiences and opinions may not apply for the broader population. Conducting interviews with a range of different people from different backgrounds is a way in which the researcher attempted to avert this challenge. Experiences can also only be recounted in interviews. This is one of the epistemological shortcomings of the interview process according to Mason. (2001).

Mason (2001) also suggests there are further challenges with conducting qualitative interviews and that this type of research is not an easy option. This type of interviewing is "greedy of resources" according to Mason (59). It is heavily consuming of skills, time and effort, both in the planning and conducting of the interviews themselves, and in the analysis of the responses. (Mason, 2001).

3.4   Triangulation Approach

Creswell (209) states that mixed method research is "relatively new in the social and human sciences as a distinct research approach". Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls, and Ormston suggest that an effective way of combining quantitative and qualitative methods is to see them equal but separate, "suited to answer different questions about the same or related topics". (Ritchie et al., 2014). Using the two methods together can be seen as a powerful resource to inform and illuminate. (Ritchie et al., 2014).

Triangulation Approach

Creswell (2003) identifies six major strategies for researchers to decide between when used a mixed method approach. The strategy used for the purpose of this research is what Creswell describes as the "concurrent triangulation strategy". (Creswell, 33). The model uses separate quantitative and qualitative methods as a means to offset the weaknesses inherent within one method with the strengths of the other method. As Ritchie et al., state each make up for the methodical "blind spots" of the other to provide a fuller picture. (Ritchie et al., 40). (Creswell, 2003). Messenger Davies and Mosdell (2006) also state that this triangulation method allows a conclusion to be established from two different points. The data collection is concurrent and happens in one phase of the research. (Creswell, 2003).

While the triangulation approach allows more in-depth data to be generated there is also limitations to this approach. Creswell states that it takes great effort and expertise to adequately study a phenomenon with two separate approaches. (Creswell, 2003). Further limitations are discussed by Ritchie *et al*. (2014) on both ontological and epistemological grounds. From the ontological perspective it is claimed that "no single reality or conception of the social world can be ascertained and that attempting to do so through the use of multiple sources is futile". (Ritchie *et al*., 40). While from the epistemological perspective it is claimed all methods have specificity in terms of the type of data they collect, thus it is unlikely by using multiple approaches perfectly coordinated data can be generated. (Ritchie *et al*., 2014). Despite these limitations the researcher felt the advantages of using the triangulation approach greatly outweighed the limitations.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1   Overview

In order to report and analyse both the quantitative and qualitative findings of this research in a clear and concise manner it was deemed necessary to split findings and analysis into two separate chapters. For this purpose chapter four will report the findings of the research. Chapter five will analyse the findings.

The chapter is divided into three separate sections: 4.2 will report the findings generated from the survey, 4.3 will report the findings generated from interviews conducted with young people involved in politics; this will be further broken down into sub-sections: interviews with young political candidates from the 2016 general election, an interview with the current youngest TD in Dáil Éireann and finally, interviews with young people involved in political party youth wings. The last section will be 4.4 which will report the findings generated from interviews conducted with representatives from the Irish media. Two CDs containing the audio files from all interviews can be found in the appendices, listed as Appendix 6.

4.2   Survey Findings

As discussed in the methodology chapter the survey was hosted on survey website SurveyMonkey. It remained open for a total of two weeks and was widely shared across online social media. The survey was made up of 10 questions which are listed in the appendices labelled as Appendix 1. In total 63 people aged in the research age bracket of 18-30 took the online survey; all 63 people answered all 10 questions when completing the survey. Therefore, the percentage and figures reported throughout this section will be breakdowns of these 63 responses.

Forty females and 23 males completed the survey; no one who identified as "other" completed it. Of these 63 people the majority of people were aged 21-23 with 34 people. The total breakdown is listed in the table below, listed as Table 1:

Answer Choices	Responses
18 – 20	3
21 – 23	34
24 – 26	19
27 – 30	7

Table 1: Breakdown of survey age responses.

Fifty-two of the people surveyed were not a member of a political party or youth wing of a political party. Eleven people were members; of these 11, 10 people commented the party they were a member of: six were members of the Green Party and one was a member of Fianna Fail, one was a member of Labour, one was a member of Anti Austerity Alliance/People Before Profit and one was a member of the Social Democrats.

Of the 63 people, 52 people voted in the 2016 Irish general election, 11 did not. Reasons commented on the survey for not voting included: "didn't have time that day", "I do not live in my constituency anymore", "work long distance from home and unsocial hours found my local polling station awkward to access", "I was not registered at home and live elsewhere" and "travel expenses".

The response from where people received the majority of information about the election is listed below in Table 2:

Answer Choices	Responses
Through social media sites	21
Media outlets such as nightly news programmes, newspapers and radio	28
Special election programmes	5
Election literature such as leaflets or party manifestos	6
Directly from candidates	1
Other (please specify)	2

Table 2: Where respondents received the majority of information about the election.

The "other" responses included one person who stated they did not receive any information about the election and one person who received the majority of the information from all of the options available.

Respondents were also asked if they thought Irish politicians cared about youth issues; their responses are as follows:
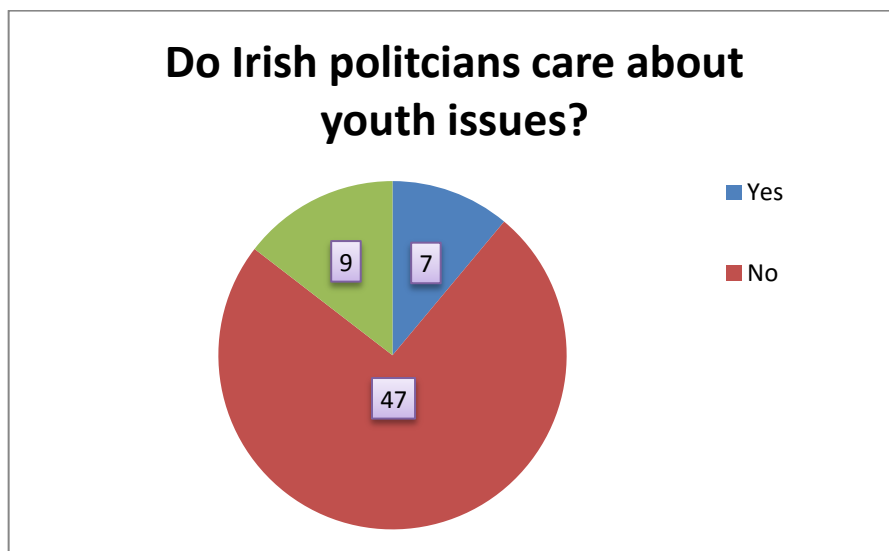

Figure 1: Responses of respondents when asked if respondents thought Irish politicians cared about youth issues.

Of those who chose "other" the majority, six out of nine, felt that some politicians do care but the majority do not. One respondent felt that you can tell what a politician cares about based on their attendance in the Dáil. Another felt that politicians only started considering young people once they reached their late twenties / early thirties. Another believed that those who did care about youth issues do not get enough backing to be able to do anything. Finally another respondent stated he works with the Union of Students in Ireland and had witnessed firsthand politicians who genuinely did care but stated that many did not. He went on to refer directly to Fine Gael stating they did not care and this has been expressed in lobbying sessions they had had with the political party.

Respondents were also asked if they thought Irish politicians engaged with young people during the election. The responses from this survey question are detailed in a pie chart on below, labelled Figure 2.

Do you think Irish politcians engaged with young people during the election?
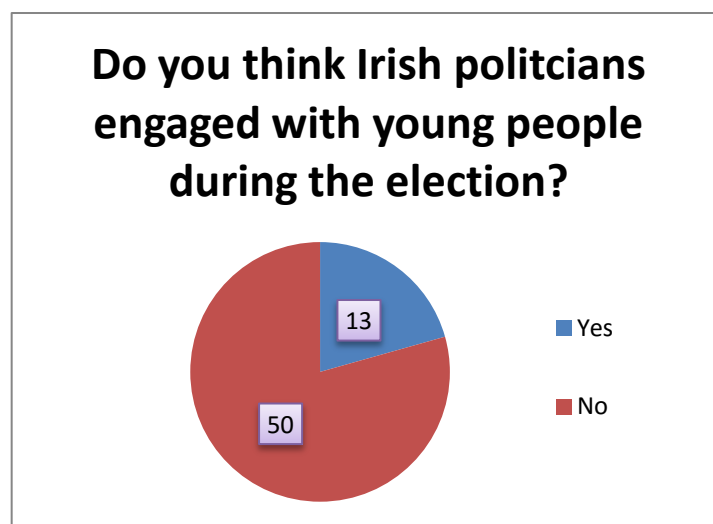
13 — Yes
50 — No

Figure 2: Response when asked if respondents felt Irish politicians engaged with young people during the election.

Eight people also provided comments along with their answers. One respondent stated young people were dealt with as "sectoral and peripheral issues", also stating that the level of engagement has not dropped since the election but rather was not very strong to begin with. Two other respondents stated they believed some smaller parties engaged more as larger parties either did not reply on young votes or focused more on their own youth wings. Finally one respondent stated that while she saw plenty of politicians angling their

arguments towards young people she has seen little evidence that they have seen a young person since the election.

In another question respondents were asked was if they thought the Irish media engaged with young people during the election. The responses from this survey question are detailed in a pie chart below, labelled Figure 3.
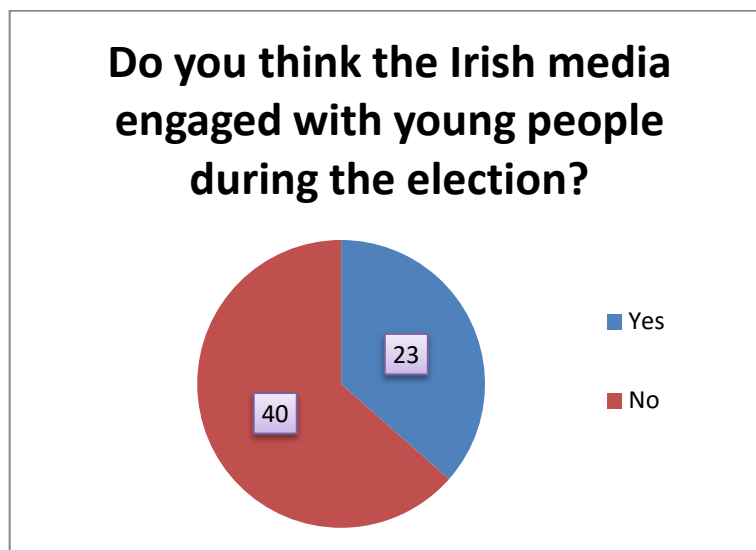

Do you think the Irish media engaged with young people during the election?

23

40

■ Yes

■ No

Twelve comments were provided along with this answer. Five of these responses stated again that they did not believe the media engaged. One respondent stated they believe the media did engage and that a lot of media outlets continue to give a voice to young people while another respondent stated that engagement had completely dropped off following the formation of the government. Another respondent stated this dropping off was apparent but only from the mainstream media not online media. Another believed it was only ever lukewarm to begin with and finally one respondent claimed that media and politics have "not grasped the concept of 'young people'" and therefore do not focus on them as an enclosed sector.

The penultimate question in this survey asked respondents if they thought young Irish people are disillusioned with Irish politics. The responses from this survey question are detailed in a pie chart below, labelled Figure 4.

Do you think young Irish people are disillusioned with Irish politics?
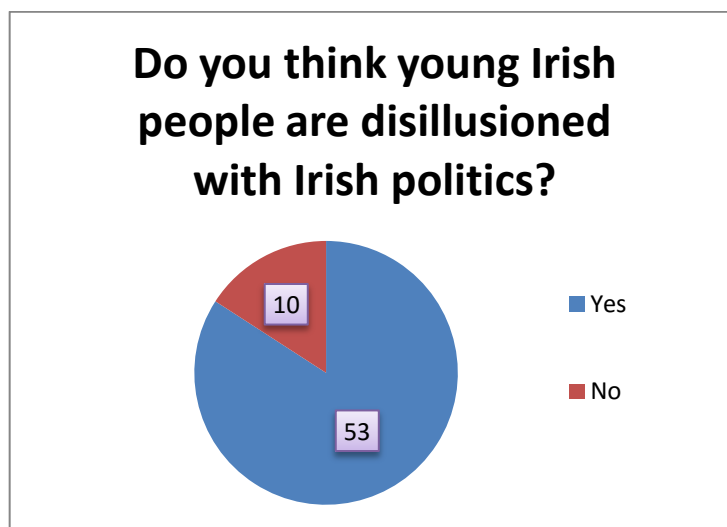
- Yes
- No

10

53

Figure 4: Responses when asked if respondents felt young Irish people are disillusioned with Irish politics.

This survey answer was accompanied by 29 comments from different respondents detailing more in-depth views on the topic. This question received the most comments of all the survey questions. The most common opinion among the 29 comments is that young people are generally ignored by politicians and the government, with two of the comments stating many of the government policies are "anti-young people". It was also stated that the recession and the feeling of being burdened with the mistakes of the previous generation have led to hopelessness and resentment from young people towards political parties and are also reasons why young people do not engage. Others suggested young people only engage when it is something they are passionate about; the marriage equality referendum is cited as one of these issues.

Another reason for the disillusionment young people have with politics is that young people simply do not understand politics; one respondent believed that with more information there would be more engagement. One respondent stated that disillusionment was not confined only to young people but all Irish people are disillusioned with politics. Another respondent claimed that Irish politics had become "a running joke among young people". Another respondent stated the disillusionment was due to both the media and politics treating young people as one group with one set of ideals and needs instead of the diverse

groups that they are. Finally, one respondent stated that the disillusionment was the fault of both politicians and young people; she stated that "politicians don't know how to engage with young people and frankly young people are pretty poor for their part too; a lot of people just don't bother with politics because it's too much effort".

The final question of this survey asked respondents how they thought engagement between Irish politics, Irish media and young Irish people could be improved. In their answers the respondents could choose more than one response. The response "more discussion of youth issues in the Dáil and in person" was the most popular with 46 people choosing it as one of their answers. The total breakdown of responses is outlined in a table below listed as Table 3.

Answer Choices	Responses
Does not need to be improved	**1**
More engagement through social media	**28**
More face-to-face engagement	**18**
More discussion of youth issues both in the Dáil and in person	**46**
More political education in schools	**41**
Other (please specify)	**9**

Table 3: Responses to how respondents thought engagement between Irish politics, Irish media and young Irish people could be improved.

Of the nine "other" responses eight commented on how they thought the relationship could be improved. These included the need for better politicians, reducing the voting age, university talks, time allotted for young people to speak in the Dáil and young voices on media platforms. One respondent stated he did not know how it could be improved. Finally, one respondent stated Ireland should introduce compulsory voting.

4.3 Findings from interviews conducted with young people involved in politics

For the purpose of this research young people involved in politics were interviewed. The intention of this was to generate data in order to gain a perspective of what representatives from young people involved in politics think about the relationship between Irish politics, the media and young people. These young people were asked to discuss topics including: how they felt politics engages with young people, how they felt the media engages with young people politically and, if they believed it needed to be, how relationships between young people, politics and the media could be improved.

Interview with young political candidates for the 2016 general election – Ciara Leonardi-Roche

Ciara Leonardi-Roche, 22, was a candidate for Anti Austerity Alliance/People Before Profit for Cork East. She was the youngest political candidate for any party in the country.

Leonardi-Roche states that politicians are completely out of touch with young people and what they want to see at this time in their lives. She believes that between the ages of 21 and 30 there is a gap where nobody really cares about what happens. She believes politicians forget that young people are the generation that is coming up and going to be creating jobs and families, instead politicians focus on big business.

In order to improve engagement Leonardi-Roche believes young people need to get involved as politicians are never going to do it. Young people know they want something different so should get involved to "mix it up a bit" according to Leonardi-Roche. She states that "young people, they don't know what they're actually capable of". They need to go beyond just dealing with issues that only affect them, as issues such as economic issues do affect them and will continue to do so. While she believes more education is important, there needs to be an open discussion with children about what they feel is right and wrong rather than being taught what is right and wrong. She also believes the media has a role to play, claiming that the media need to look outside what is happening in the circle inside the Dáil and stop focusing on the same people saying the same thing over and over again.

Finally, Leonardi-Roche claims that during the election she received a lot of media attention as she was the youngest candidate in the country, the media wanted to know why, as a

young person, she was running. Young people were also positive toward her, as she connected with young people who were sick of being left out and feeling forgotten.

Interview with young political candidates for the 2016 general election – Claire Kerrane

Claire Kerrane, 23, was a candidate for Sinn Fein for Roscommon/Galway. She was the youngest Sinn Fein candidate in the country.

Kerrane states that "young people feel disconnected from the political world". She claims that young people feel they don't get a look in and that politicians are a lot older and out of touch. However, she also states a lot of young people simply aren't bothered with politics. Through her own experience young people didn't engage unless they wanted something. Kerrane puts this down to the impact of the situation they find themselves in, using examples of friends who have emigrated and being on low social welfare payments. She believes engagement depends on young people's age and what they are doing in their lives. Different issues are important to different people.

Kerrane states that education is important in improving this. She also believes young people have to try to become more engaged and interested in politics. Work also has to be done by politicians by beginning to discuss issues about young people, claiming that if they talk about young people's issues young people will want to be involved. Kerrane also refers to the media as a factor in improving the relationship. She claims the way in which the media write about young people can be negative, using stereotypes of young people. By being more positive about young people more will engage with them.

Finally, Kerrane stated that her age played more of a factor in her election campaign than she had anticipated. Even though she has experience dealing with issues she was frequently deemed too young for the job she was running for. She also claimed that media attention in her constituency was poor, but claims it was more due to her party then her age.

Interview with young political candidates for the 2016 general election – Cormac Manning

Cormac Manning, 23, was a candidate for the Green Party for Cork North-West.

Manning agrees that young people feel politics doesn't engage with them. Through his own experiences canvassing during the election he found young people didn't care about politics. He claims this is somewhat of a cycle; young people are not interested but are greatly

affected by decisions but because they are not engaged TDs do not focus on them leading them to become more disengaged.

Manning believes there are multiple ways in which the relationship can be improved. Young people need to be shown the relevance of voting, according to Manning. Showing them the distinctions between parties and the affect their vote can have could engage them. Also Manning claims the discourse between politicians, and its reflection in the media, is not appealing to young people. He claims politics is sometimes treated like a soap opera by the media, showing a "bunch of old men in suits shouting at each other the whole time". The media needs to cover issues and policy choices; this may help engage young people. He also states more young people need to be involved in the media as young journalists can better relate to young people. Manning also states that education on the political system is important and that registering young people while they are still in school may aid engagement.

Interview with young political candidates for the 2016 general election – Lorna Bogue

Lorna Bogue, 24, was a candidate for the Green Party for Cork South-Central.

When asked if she would agree that politics does not engage young people Bogue simply answers "yep". She states that policy is not made for people "our age". Young people do not see politics as engaging with their issues, and it doesn't, according to Bogue. Engagement and discourse is towards 40-65 year olds in the higher or middle income wage bracket.

Bogue states that young people are not apathetic. Things they are engaged with are not classified as political acts, even though Bogue believes some are political acts. She uses the initiative "Reimagine Cork" as an example of this. Engagement with this is not seen as a political act. Bogue also states it is harder to get involved in politics because there is "such corruption and dirtiness associated with it". She also agrees the media needs to engage more, but she can understand why they do not engage stating that it makes sense for the media to cover stories about the settled group who pays for the media. Bogue also believes more education is necessary to improve the relationship. She claims that once politics itself changes to the point where young people's issues are being discussed young people will naturally be more engaged.

Finally, Bogue states reaction to her being a young candidate was half positive and half questioning why. She states her appearance on the *Vincent Browne People's Debate* increased her appearance and respect among her fellow candidates. Bogue also stated she still feels she represents those who voted for her, and it is something you cannot run away from.

Interview with young people involved in political party youth wings – Grace Williams

Grace Williams, 22, is the current national chair of Labour Youth.

When speaking about engagement between young people and politics, Williams states that even as a member of Labour Youth is it difficult to get politicians to listen to you. She puts this down to everyone having their own agenda and trying to get everyone's agenda working in tandem is difficult. She also states that young people are not listened to; there is an idea from other people that "we [young people] don't know what we're talking about; we're only 20 this and 20 that".

When speaking about why young people do not engage with politics Williams refers to party and political structures and trust as being some of the major issues. According to Williams, structures of both political parties and politics overall needs to be more inclusive. She believes there is a failing on politicians to engage with young people and that they do not particularly care what young people want. Finally Williams speaks about trust. She refers to the pledge made and subsequently broken by the Labour Party to not increase third level fees; because of this she states that "young people will never trust the Labour party again for many years". She believes that the Labour Party did not take responsibility and that politicians overall need to be held more accountable and this will lead people to trust them. By having open and honest conversations with politicians the relationship will improve, according to Williams.

Williams also believes more education is needed about politics to improve the relationship. The stigma surrounding politics also needs to be reduced. As Williams states politics is not a "dirty word". Although unsure where the stigma comes from Williams suggests it stems from the broken relationship between young people and politics.

Finally, Williams believes the media also has a role in improving the relationship. Although adamant she is not attacking the media she feels they need to play a more honest role in the way in which they report issues and events.

Interview with young people involved in political party youth wings – Patrick Martin and Colm O'Rourke

Patrick Martin, 30, is the current head of Young Fine Gael in Dublin. Colm O'Rourke, 25, is the director of communications for Young Fine Gael

When discussing their youth wings relationship with the media both Martin and O'Rourke believe the media do not care what young people in political parties are doing. The media only become interested when they are saying something controversial, according to O'Rourke. Martin states he would like to see youth wings being given a voice during times of election. He suggests a youth wing leader debate and claims it could get more people involved and raise the youth profile.

When asked about the engagement between young people and politics both Martin and O'Rourke agree that it works both ways, young people also need to engage as well. Martin states that "politics will be more engaging with young people when young people are involved with politics". He cites his own membership of Young Fine Gael as an example of this, explaining that they are always listened to by the older party when they raise issues. O'Rourke states that young people are political but just don't know it. He states engagement with organisations and charities are political engagements also. He also states that political parties do not recognise that young people can have a voice now as well as in the future; he claims "young people aren't just the voice of the future, they're also the voice of the now".

When asked how engagement could be improved both Martin and O'Rourke speak about the need for greater education about what goes on in the Dáil. They also believe the media needs to take a fresh approach by seeing what young people have to say on issues. They also believe politics needs to become more accessible to young people and more of their issues need to be mixed in with other issues being discussed. But again Martin points to the role young people need to play as well, stating that young people need to take a broader interest in politics focusing on, for example, not only on student fees but how the budget will impact them.

Finally, both Martin and O'Rourke believe that the relationship between politics and young people is definitely improving although at a slow and gradual pace. More needs to be done by political parties to create youth groups and give young people a bigger voice internally in party structures. By doing this both Martin and O'Rourke believe the relationship will improve.

Interview with the current youngest TD in Dáil Éireann – Jack Chambers

Jack Chambers TD is currently the youngest TD in Dáil Éireann, aged 25. He is a TD for Dublin West.

During his election campaign for the 2016 general election Chambers stated he received positive reactions from both the media and young people. He believes young people want to elect other young people, stating that as a country we "don't have enough younger people in politics; it's an issue in all constituencies".

When asked why he thinks young people are not as engaged with politics Chambers stated that he believes that the majority of people only begin to engage with politics when it affects them; he cites buying a house as an example of this. While you're never going to have everyone engaged it is important that young people begin to see the relevance of politics earlier on, according to Chambers.

Chambers believes one of the ways in which to improve this engagement is through education. He believes civic education at second level at the moment is poor. Classes need to be increased to three – four per week; this along with the introduction of the Leaving Certificate politics and society subject could help. Chambers also believes younger people, 16 and 17 year olds, should be given a vote. This would increase both engagement from young people and politicians, according to Chambers. When asked what way the media could help in improving engagement and relationships Chambers believes that the media simply reflect the issues being spoken about by politicians and that it is the job of the politicians to initiate it.

Finally, when asked how fellow politicians in the Dáil have reacted and treated Chambers, as the youngest TD, he stated that there is mutual respect across parties and that they are all equal in the Dáil as they have all been elected. Chambers also states that he has never let his "age impede what I want to raise, talk about or do".

4.4 Findings from interviews conducted with representatives from the Irish media

For the purpose of this research two journalists were interviewed. The intention of this was to generate data in order to gain a perspective of what representatives from the Irish media think about the relationship between Irish politics, the media and young people. The two journalists that were interviewed were Hugh O'Connell from the *Sunday Business Post* and Gavan Reilly from *TodayFM*. During the interviews conducted topics including how young people are spoken and written about in the media, the engagement between politics and the media with young people during the election and if the relationships between young people, politics and the media needed to be improved and if so, how could this be achieved were all discussed.

Interview with Hugh O'Connell

O'Connell stated that political parties sought to harness and use the engagement and turnout from young people during the marriage equality referendum for the general election. This was not able to be harnessed and repeated for the general election as policies discussed by politicians do not speak to young people; politicians focus more on people at work and people paying taxes, according to O'Connell.

O'Connell agrees that young people are not engaged with politics and views it as "a real problem". O'Connell stated that he believes young people don't see people involved in politics that they can identify with, seeing politicians as mainly "old men" and politics being an old man's game. He believes that this is changing, with more young people coming into politics, citing Jack Chambers as an example; young people may become more engaged although he believes this will be very gradual and generational.

O'Connell also states that there is not as much respect for young people as there is for older people. He comments on political parties discriminating against young people, using the cut in dole payments for those under 25 and the rising third level education registration fees as examples. O'Connell states he also finds this in his own job; as a 28 year old, politicians do not speak to him in the same way they speak to correspondents who have been around for 20 or 30 years.

He also states that when young people are spoken to is it often done in a condescending manner with young people being spoken down to. There is no appreciation in the media for the real issues affecting young people, according to O'Connell. This results in a condescending and dismissive attitude being taken towards young people.

When asked how relationships could be improved O'Connell stated that more young people need to be brought in. Political parties need to become better with engaging; O'Connell suggests recruiting through youth wings and going into colleges to encourage young people to get involved. By getting more young people into the Dáil and on county councils more youth issues can be brought to the fore. Political parties also need to increase their social media engagement, according to O'Connell. Issues need to be pitched to young people in a stronger way and a greater sense of inclusion is needed.

Finally, O'Connell states the media also have a role in improving relations. Media organisations often have older workforces and therefore write about issues that affect them, talking to older people in the process. O'Connell refers to this as a vicious cycle which is difficult to get out of. He states that there "isn't enough of an acknowledgement of issues affecting young people in the media primarily because the people writing about it are older". There is a need for more young people in journalism including, O'Connell suggests, youth affairs reporters.

Interview with Gavan Reilly

Reilly stated that he believed young people's issues are better reflected in the media than some people would suspect. He puts this down to newsrooms becoming younger; this refers to the staff employed in newsrooms. There is no longer a "blinkered view" of what the world is like for young people as their issues are now being discussed by younger people in newsrooms rather than older people.

Reilly also commented throughout the interview about the importance of social media as a tool for young people's self expression. He stated that it allows other people to be presented with the views of young people, views which may differ from their own, and this has led to a more reflective portrayal of youth issues. This increase use of social media has also, according to Reilly, allowed young people to engage with each other and begin to act as a

unit in expressing their views and making sure they are heard. Reilly cites the recent marriage equality referendum as an example of this.

Reilly also commented that politicians must begin to utilise social media more and stop relying on traditional forms of media to carry their messages. While this can also have some negatives such as abusive messages or tweets, Reilly believes that there is no better way to find out what constituents think than by stripping out the middle man and speaking directly to them through social media.

When asked how relationships could be improved Reilly stated that both the media and institutions such as the Oireachtas have their parts to play. The media, according to Reilly, often treat politics like a sport or a stock market, focusing more on who is up or down in the polls than issues being discussed. He states that "media generally speaking must do better to try and focus on not just the personalities of who is involved but in fact their opinions". He also stated institutions need to become clearer and more user friendly, taking the Oireachtas website as an example of this. Politicians also have a responsibility to tell voters what they are doing and how decisions are made. Reilly also states more education as a factor that can improve engagement.

Finally Reilly believed that more young people were beginning to get more engaged. Again Reilly cited social media as one of the reasons. Teenagers now have more access to information more quickly; this means it is now harder for them to stay in a "bubble". Reilly believes that the more they realise the stuff going on in the world around them the more likely they are to get engaged.

Chapter Five: Analysis

5.1 Overview

When reporting the findings it became apparent that they went some way in aiding the researcher in answering the research questions. When compared and analysed along with the literature it hoped that the findings will fully answer the research questions and provide a greater understanding of the relationships young people have with politics and the media in Ireland in 2016. This chapter is broken down thematically with focus put on the most important findings from the research. For this reason this chapter is broken into three separate sections. Section 5.2 will focus on engagement, 5.3 will focus on the increasing importance of social media and finally, 5.4 will focus on the media's contrasting views.

5.2 Engagement

As discussed by many of the academics in the literature, including Norris (2003) and Manning (2014), engagement between politics and young people is low. Norris and Manning discuss this lack of engagement in terms of young people in both the United States and the United Kingdom respectively. It is clear from the research findings that this lack of engagement is also apparent between young people and politics in Ireland. This idea of a lack of engagement is not exclusive to just those who are not involved in politics but is apparent even in those who are members and hold positions in political parties. This is demonstrated in the interviews conducted with both Labour Youth and Young Fine Gael members. This agreement about a lack of engagement is seen across parties, demonstrating that it is a problem facing all political parties and politics as a whole.

This lack of engagement corresponds to the idea put forward by Norris that "young people are believed to be particularly disillusioned about the major institutions of representative democracy". (Norris, 2).The findings also demonstrate this, as 53 survey respondents agreed that young people are disillusioned with politics. The lack of engagement with politics can also be seen in the low numbers of survey respondents, who were members of a political party with just 11 people stating they were members.

The reasons for this lack of engagement remained constant throughout the research. The idea that politicians were out of touch with young people, politics not discussing issues that affect young people and the inaccessibility of politics were all common factors across the

research. A low level of trust was also an issue, discussed by both Williams and Sloam (2014). Lance Bennett also suggests that politics has almost become a "dirty word" for young people. (Lance Bennett, 1). The idea was also suggest by Bogue and Williams who claimed there was a stigma and dirtiness surrounding politics which needed to be removed.

Surprisingly the issue of young people not engaging was also a common factor. Young people were seen by their peers as not being interested or even bothered with politics. Henderson (2014) also suggests this as she refers to this lack of engagement as a crisis, discussing young people's declining interest in the political process as one of the main contributing factors. This suggestion demonstrates that engagement is two-way; both sides of the relationship need to engage more with each other in order for it to improve.

This idea of disengagement with politics is amplified by the apparent lack of engagement between the media and young people. Baumgartner and Morris (2010) state this as they suggest young people's differing media habits to their older counterparts promote political disengagement. Henderson's study also found an absence of younger voice in political reporting in Britain. (Henderson, 2014). Through the research findings this can be deemed an issue for political reporting in Ireland also, and an issue which many of the interviewees, including media representatives, discussed.

Ways to improve engagement

With the exception of one respondent from the survey every other person surveyed and interviewed agreed engagement between young people, politics and the media needed to be improved. Despite this agreement, the things they felt needed to happen in order to improve the relationships differed greatly.

The most popular suggestion from the survey was that youth issues need to be spoken about in the Dáil and in person. This was reiterated by the majority of all interviewees who claimed that once youth issues begin to be discussed young people will become more engaged. This is in line with the belief, suggested by many, that politicians themselves must do more to engage with young people. This corresponds with the literature from academics Xenos and Foot (2008) who suggest politicians must begin to consider themselves as facilitators in engaging the young.

Education was also one of the most common suggestions by all respondents to the research, both in the survey and in interviews. Lance Bennett (2008) also suggests this, claiming the lack of civic education in schools has left little opportunity for young people to embrace and communicate about politics in their own terms. All interviews and 41 survey respondents believed political education in Ireland needed to be improved. There was a belief that the current subject of CSPE (civic, social and political education) was not working, with more than one respondent referring to it as a "joke".

As discussed above there is an idea that young people do not engage with politics and need to improve on this. Chambers, a TD, commented that young people only begin to engage when issues begin to affect them as they grow up. This is a belief reiterated by Flanagan (2009) who also suggests young people become more engaged as they become older. Norris also suggests this as she states "young people will display different patterns of activism which persist as they age". (Norris, 8). Despite this idea that when young people get older they will eventually begin to engage, Martin and O'Rourke state young people need to start engaging now, while they are still young. By engaging with issues other than youth issues; they will have more of an interest in what goes on in the Dáil and subsequently become more engaged. This need for an increase in youth engagement suggests that although it can be easy for young people to blame politicians and politics for the lack of engagement there is also onus on young people themselves to help improve the relationship and engage.

Recommendations for improvement also varied depending on the position of the interviewee. Those more involved in political parties gave more in-depth analysis of how they believed things needed to be improved. Party structure, reducing the stigma around politics and lowering voting ages were all examples of this. These varied opinions and suggestions demonstrate that there is not a definite or single approach which can be taken that can improve engagement. While no suggestion can be deemed wrong, the suggestions which are the most popular can be deemed as ones which should be implemented first, if the relationship is to improve.

Although none of the literature suggests a time frame during which engagement can be improved, it can be suggested that the process of improving the relationships will not be completed quickly. The majority of interviewees refer to the marriage equality referendum as an example of positive youth engagement, suggesting that it is something that is possible.

O'Connell states politicians sought to harness the engagement witnessed during the referendum. It was agreed by the majority of interviewees that this had failed, as the turnout numbers seen in the marriage equality referendum were not repeated for the 2016 general election. This demonstrates that mainstream politics and young people have a long way to go in improving their relationship. The process, as stated by more than one interviewee, will be slow and gradual. There is a belief that the process will be very generational; as more young people become involved in politics the more other young people will seek to engage and be engaged with.

The role of the media

Media outlets were the main area from which respondents to the survey received the majority of their information about the 2016 general election. This alone suggests that the media play an important role in the relationship between young people and politics.

The research also suggests that the media play a vital role in improving the relationships between young people and politics by improving their own engagement with young people. This belief was not apparent with all respondents. Bogue and Chambers believe the media cover their target audience and only reflect what is being said. Despite this, the majority of the research suggests the media also have to improve their levels of youth engagement.

It is suggested that the media simply do not care about youth issues and have not grasped the concept of young people. Henderson's study also found this, as the young people she spoke to claim the media only cared about depicted young people in a negative way focusing more on this then their actual issues. (Henderson, 2014). The findings suggested that honesty, inclusion of young voices, focusing on issues instead of personalities and looking outside the circle of the Dáil are ways in which the research suggests the media can improve. Kerrane states that she believes the media can often portray young people in a negative way; this reflects the idea of ephebiphobia as discussed by Henderson (2014), Atheide (2006) and Byron (2009).

O'Connell states he believes there is not as much respect from the media about young people's issues and therefore the media often adopt a condescending and dismissive attitude towards young people. Again, Henderson's study corresponds to this belief. Journalists did not believe the misrepresentation of young people to be problematic.

(Henderson, 2014). This suggests a lack of respect for young people as discussed by O'Connell. This can be viewed as an explanation as to why the majority of respondents feel that the media need to improve their engagement. It also explains why the media do not cover young people in the first place.

5.3   *Increasing importance of social media*

Many of the academics cited in the literature review discussed the growing importance of online and social media in political communication. Although Baumgartner and Morris (2010) comment that the idea social media will spur a democratic revolution is overstated, it remains clear that social media holds great potential, potential which has not yet been realised. This is emphasised by the findings which state the second most popular way respondents of the survey received the majority of information about the 2016 general election was through social media. This demonstrates the increasingly important role of social media in the way in which information about politics is communicated and engagement with politicians occurs in Ireland in 2016.

Reilly states that social media is being used by young people as a means for expression. This increased use of social media also suggests that young people may begin to engage more; as they begin to receive more information about the world around them, they may be more inclined to engage about issues they are interested in. Through this increased use of social media to gather information young people are beginning to determine the type of information they receive. This, as Lance Bennett (2008) suggests, increased use of social media is evolving the traditional role of the gatekeeper. Not every young person will "follow" or "like" political parties, politicians or media outlets on social media. Those who do may only "follow" or "like" certain politicians or news outlets. This is controlling the information they receive. Thus young people are beginning to become their own gatekeepers, deciding what kind of information they receive and from where they receive it. Singer (2005) agrees that the traditional role of the gatekeeper is changing with the growth of online media, "the concept of discrete gates through with such information passes is obliterated". (Singer, 178-9).

Reilly also suggests politicians must begin to use social media more in engaging with young people. In doing so they will be able to directly communicate with young people, something which can help engage with them. This is something discussed by both Molony (2014) and Ó

Beacháin (2014), and ultimately has the potential to increase the engagement of the electorate, most notably young voters. However, as proven by studies discussed in the literature, Irish politicians are aware that social media is changing the dynamics of political communication they tend to favour the more traditional means of communication, especially during an election. (Ó Beacháin, 2014).

Molony (2014) and Ó Beacháin (2014) claim social media is something which will only serve to complement traditional media when relaying information or when canvassing during an election. Molony (2014) also believes it has potential to introduce new modes of two-way political communication. Both academics are not confident in the ability of social media to change political communication and engagement. Despite this, it is clear from the research and the literature that social media is playing an increasingly important role in the relationships between young people, politics and the media. The research also suggests that social media has the potential to improve communication and engagement if utilised correctly. For this to happen, politicians need to understand the importance of social media and communicate in a way which appeals to young people.

5.4   Contrasting media opinion

During interviews with both journalists, O'Connell and Reilly, both discussed the type of workforce present in newsrooms and the impact the type of workforce has on what is discussed in the media. Despite both working in the media, specifically political correspondence, both had a completely different view of the workforce and its impact on engagement and communication.

While Reilly stated that workforces in newsrooms had become younger and therefore there is no longer a "blinkered view" of the world for young people as it is people of that age group discussing it, O'Connell has an entirely different perspective on newsrooms. He stated they are run by older people who discuss issues affecting them. This is a view shared by Henderson (2014) following her study of the British media. This difference of opinion suggests that there is not a cohesive idea of the type of newsrooms in Ireland in 2016. It also suggests that newsrooms may differ in workforces depending on the sector of the media; for example radio may have younger workforces then print media.

Both Reilly's and O'Connell's statements about the impact of the age of workforces are also interesting. Both men state the type of workforce has an impact on what is discussed in the media. This is an example of agenda setting. As Brundidge and Rice (2009) discuss, the media decides what issues are important and focus the public's attention on those issues. Despite their different opinions on what type of workforces are in place in Ireland in 2016 they both state that these workforces decide what issues to discuss, therefore setting the agenda for public discussion. While Brundidge and Rice (2009) comment that the agenda setting function of the media is becoming altered by the internet, young people's reliance on the media for information, as stated above, demonstrate that they remain affected by agenda setting. As Henderson (2014) states this agenda setting restricts the engagement of young people.

While it can be suggested younger workforces may be limited to the type of newsrooms Reilly works in, online and radio, and older workforces may be limited to print media it remains clear that agenda setting is in place. The question remains, if print media were to adopt a more inclusive strategy when deciding what to discuss and online and radio continued discussing youth issues would this lead to more engagement from young people? The issue of alienating older or middle aged members of the public would also be a factor to consider if adopting this approach.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

It was the intention of this research to examine the relationships between young people, politics and the media. Therefore the research questions imposed were: Does politics engage with young people? What role do the media play in the engagement between politics and young people? What can be done to improve relationships between young people, politics and the media? This examination was undertaken through a survey of young people and multiple interviews with representatives from both politics and the media.

The analysis and findings demonstrated that politics does not engage with young people and that young people do not engage with politics. All respondents, both the survey respondents and interviewees agreed that politics and politicians need to do more to engage with young people. It was also the opinion of the majority of interviewees that young people had a duty to engage. Onus could no longer be simply placed on politicians for not engaging. It can be concluded that engagement between young people and politics must be two-way, with both sides making efforts to engage and thus improve the relationship.

The media also play an important role in the relationship between politics and young people through their own relationship with young people. As stated in the survey the majority of respondents received the majority of their information about the 2016 general election from media outlets. This demonstrates the important role they play in bridging politics and young people. Although some interviewees stated the media are simply doing their jobs in what issues they cover it can be suggested that McCombs and Shaw's theory of agenda setting also plays a role. It can be concluded that, like politicians, the media must begin to engage more with young people if the relationship between young people and politics is to improve. By engaging more the relationship between young people and the media will also improve.

As stated above, young people engaging more and media engagement are factors which can help improve the relationships between young people, politics and the media. These two factors are merely two in many factors which were suggested by all research respondents. As suspected, improving engagement from politicians was one of the most common suggestions. This most notably involved engagement through more discussion of youth issues both in the Dáil, in the media and in other areas of daily life. Education was another common suggestion. A clearer understanding of exactly what happens in the Dáil and how

decisions are made by our elected representative is something which the research suggests is badly needed. The introduction of a Leaving Certificate subject is hoped to go some way in improving the political knowledge of young people in Ireland and subsequently improve the engagement of these young people.

One of other the most important ways of improving the relationships is through the increase use of social media. Although in the literature Molony (2014) does not believe social media has the potential to change Irish political life, the survey and interview data suggest it is becoming increasingly important. The survey states that social media was the second largest place people received the majority of information about the 2016 general election. Social media is also listed as the third biggest way the relationship between politics and young people can be improved. More young people are moving online, receiving their information through their phones via social media sites. It is the job of politicians and politics overall to follow young people online.

The key finding of this research is that the relationships between young people, politics and the media are fractured and are in great need of improvement.

By using both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the research the researcher was allowed to gain the most information possible from the respondents. The introduction of comment sections in the majority of all survey questions allowed the survey to yield some qualitative data. This data was of great use to the research as it gave a better perspective on the type of person taking the survey and a more in-depth and detailed view of the opinions they had.

The qualitative interviews, conducted in a semi-structured style, also helped to yield detailed and necessary information in order to answer the research questions and fully examine the relationship between young people, politics and the media. By conducting the interviews in this way topics which had not been considered were also brought to the researcher's attention. This meant the researcher also was also able to expand the level of knowledge on the topic, improving the subsequent interviews and the depth of knowledge demonstrated in the research and findings.

Finally, the findings and analysis discussed in this research are in keeping with the literature available on the topic. As stated in the literature *The Millennial Dialogue* report states that

only 50% of those surveyed think very few, if any, politicians encourage young people to get involved in politics. The literature regarding social media usage by politicians also corresponds to the research conducted, as politicians do not engage on social media. The literature regarding the lack of engagement by young people and the suggested reasons why there is such a lack of engagement also correspond to the research. As the majority of the literature available did not directly consider Irish young people or Irish politics or the Irish media, tending to focus more on the United States of America and the United Kingdom, it can be suggested that this experience is not solely an Irish one. Instead, it can be suggested, through the literature and the research conducted that this is a worldwide issue.

6.2   Recommendations

Given the lack of literature available discussing the Irish experience of engagement between young people and politics and the lack of literature available discussing the engagement between Irish young people and the Irish media, it can simply be suggested that more literature is necessary.

An effort must be made to examine and seek to understand the relationships between young people, politics and the media. This is something also suggested by Sloam (2016) following his own research. He states that "there needs to be a careful consideration of why young people do not participate in some forms of political engagement and why they do get involved in many other forms of political action". (Sloam, 534).

As they, as suggested by the research, are all connected an effort must be made by all three sectors to analyse their own positions and actions in both the current environment and their roles in the future.

To achieve this, similar interviews and surveys must be conducted albeit on a larger scale. The researcher suggests this research be utilised as a springboard for further study and work in this field. The larger scale for this recommended research should include a wider ranging survey conducted amongst a larger audience of young people in Ireland. A higher response rate is needed in order to gain the most information about the relationship young people feel they have with the media and politics.

Interviews with a wider range of media representatives are also necessary. Representatives from the main daily newspapers, Sunday newspapers, television and radio broadcasters and

stand-alone online media websites should be questioned about their opinions and methods on how they can improve the relationship between young people and the media. As the majority of online news websites in Ireland are extensions of existing newspapers, broadcasters and radio stations each individual interviewee's online sites should also be considered during this process.

Finally, it is necessary to gain information from politicians about what they believe their relationship is with young people. This research did not seek to interview or survey sitting politicians, with the exception of the youngest TD Jack Chambers, as the research primarily focused on young people's opinions about their relationship with politics and the media. By gaining information from a larger amount of sitting politicians a deeper understanding of the relationship and the level of their engagement from their perspective can be generated.

Finally, by conducting this wider ranging research it is hoped that the relationship young people have with politics and the media can be better understood and this can lead to the relationships being improved, thus more young people may begin to engage in politics.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

The list of survey questions and the answer options are listed below.

1. What is your gender?

    Female

    Male

    Other

2. What is your age?

    17 or younger

    18 to 20

    21 to 23

    24 to 26

    27 to 30

    31 to 35

    35 to 40

    41 or older

3. Are you a member of a political party or youth wing of a political party?

    Yes

    No

    Comment section

4. Did you vote in the 2016 Irish general election?

    Yes

    No

    Comment section

5. Where did you receive the majority of information about the election?

    Through social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter

    Media outlets such as newspapers, nightly news programmes, radio

    Special election programmes such as leaders debates

    Election literature such as leaflets or party manifestos

    Directly from candidates

    Other (please specify)

6. Do you think Irish politicians care about youth issues?

> Yes
>
> No
>
> Other (please specify)

7. Do you think Irish politicians engaged with young people during the election?

> Yes
>
> No
>
> Comment section

8. Do you think the Irish media engaged with young people during the election?

> Yes
>
> No
>
> Comment section

9. Do you think Irish young people are disillusioned with Irish politics?

> Yes
>
> No
>
> Comment section

10. How do you think engagement between Irish politics, Irish media and Irish young people could be improved?

> Does not need to be improved
>
> More engagement through social media
>
> More face-to-face engagement
>
> More discussion of youth issues both in the Dáil and in person
>
> More political education in schools
>
> Other (please specify)

Appendix 2a: interviews questions for young political candidates in the 2016 Irish general election. [1]

1. At the time of the election what age were you?
2. Looking back at the election how was your experience with the media?
3. It's suggesting young people don't think the media or politics either engages or cares about them, would you agree?
4. What needs to happen to change this?
5. What is the media's role?
6. Given your experience would you run for election again?

Appendix 2b: interview questions for young members of Irish political parties. [2]

1. What is your age and title within your youth organisation?
2. Why did you get involved in politics?
3. What is the number of active members in your organisation?
4. Do you believe politics engages with young people?
5. How do the media engage with your organisation?
6. What needs to happen for the relationships between young people and politics to improve?
7. What role do the media play in this?
8. It is believed young people have to wait to have a role in politics is this true or can they have a role now?

---

[1] Listed are the questions the researcher went into each interview with, not included are questions which arose during each individual interview.
[2] Listed are the questions the researcher went into each interview with, not included are questions which arose during each individual interview.

Appendix 2c: interview questions for Jack Chambers TD. [3]

1. At the time of the election, what age were you?

2. Why did you decide to get involved in politics?

3. During the election and after how was the media response to you?

4. How has the response been from young people?

5. It is suggested that young people don't engage, why do you think that is?

6. It is also suggested politics doesn't care about young people or their issues, what's your opinion on that?

7. What needs to happen to change this?

8. What needs to be done to get young people involved?

9. Do they simply just get involved on a single issue basis?

10. What role could the media play in getting young people involved?

11. Is trying to engage young people something you'll be trying to do during your term in the Dáil?

Appendix 2d: interview questions for representatives from the Irish media. [4]

1. Do you think that young people and politics are accurately discussed or reflected on in the media?

2. Is there a perception in the media that the majority of young people simply aren't interested and if so, what has caused this perception?

3. There is an idea that when the media or politicians speak to young people it is often condescending, would you agree with this and if so, why do you think it is?

4. How do you think the relationship between politics, the media and young people could be improved?

5. What role do the media have in improving the relationship between young people and politics?

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[3] Listed are the questions the researcher went into each interview with, not included are questions which arose during each individual interview.
[4] Listed are the questions the researcher went into each interview with, not included are questions which arose during each individual interview.

Appendix 3a: information sheet for young political candidates in the 2016 Irish general election.

Information Sheet

Title of Research Study:

"The relationship between young people, politics and the media during the 2016 Irish general election"

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Dear interviewee,

You are invited to take part in a research study to examine the relationship between the media and young people during the 2016 Irish general election. I would like to interview you to ask you about your opinions on this relationship and what you thought about it during this period. This research is part of a Master's Thesis in Journalism and Media Communications for Griffith College Dublin.

Before you decide whether to take part in the study it is important that you understand what the research is for and what you will be asked to do. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep. You will also be asked to sign a consent form. You can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study without giving a reason.

The purpose of the research study is to examine your thoughts about the relationship between young people have with the media and politics.

You have been chosen because of your experience as a young person involved in politics and one of the youngest candidates in the 2016 Irish general election. If you choose to take part, the interview will last no more than 15 minutes and will be arranged at a time to suit you.

Information from the interview will be used analyse the relationship between young people and the media during this period.

You are free to stop the interview at any time without giving a reason.

The interview will be recorded. Each of the interviewee's responses and information will be kept in a password-protected folder. Personal information such as name and party affiliation will be published in the finished dissertation alongside the responses given in the interview.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Carey

086 2128934

rachelcarey17@gmail.com

Appendix 3b: information sheet for young members of Irish political parties.

Information Sheet

Title of Research Study:

"The relationship between young people, politics and the media during the 2016 Irish general election"

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Dear interviewee,

You are invited to take part in a research study to examine the relationship between the media and young people during the 2016 Irish general election. I would like to interview you to ask you about your opinions on this relationship and what you thought about it during this period. This research is part of a Master's Thesis in Journalism and Media Communications for Griffith College Dublin.

Before you decide whether to take part in the study it is important that you understand what the research is for and what you will be asked to do. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep. You will also be asked to sign a consent form. You can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study without giving a reason.

The purpose of the research study is to examine your thoughts about the relationship between young people have with politics and the media.

You have been chosen because of your experience as a young person involved with politics. If you choose to take part, the interview will last no more than 15 minutes and will be arranged at a time to suit you.

Information from the interview will be used analyse the relationship between young people and the media during this period.

You are free to stop the interview at any time without giving a reason.

The interview will be recorded. Each of the interviewee's responses and information will be kept in a password-protected folder. Personal information such as name and party affiliation will be published in the finished dissertation alongside the responses given in the interview.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Carey

086 2128934

rachelcarey17@gmail.com

Appendix 3c: information sheet for representatives from the Irish media.

Information Sheet

Title of Research Study:

"The relationship between young people, politics and the media during the 2016 Irish general election."

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Dear interviewee,

You are invited to take part in a research study to examine the relationship between the media and young people during the 2016 Irish general election. I would like to interview you to ask you about your opinions on this relationship and what you thought about it during this period. This research is part of a Master's Thesis in Journalism and Media Communications for Griffith College Dublin.

Before you decide whether to take part in the study it is important that you understand what the research is for and what you will be asked to do. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep. You will also be asked to sign a consent form. You can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study without giving a reason.

The purpose of the research study is to examine your thoughts about the relationship between young people and the media during the last general election.

You have been chosen because of your experience in working in the media during this time. If you choose to take part, the interview will last no more than 20 minutes and will be arranged at a time to suit you.

Information from the interview will be used analyse the relationship between young people and the media during this period.

You are free to stop the interview at any time without giving a reason.

The interview will be recorded. Each of the interviewee's responses and information will be kept in a password-protected folder. Personal information such as name and place of work will be published in the finished dissertation alongside the responses given in the interview.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Carey

086 2128934

rachelcarey17@gmail.com

Appendix 4a: Page one of the consent form signed by all interviewees.[5]

Consent Form

Researcher: Rachel Carey

- The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between young people, politics and the media during the Irish 2016 general election. It will examine both young people, specifically focusing on young political candidates, and journalists opinions about the relationship.

- You will be asked 10-15 questions about opinion on the relationship between the media and young people during the 2016 election. The interview should last around 30 minutes.

- This research will be of benefit as it draws on the experience of both young people and journalists during the time of the 2016 Irish general election and discusses the relationship between young people and the media during this period. A lot of research up to this point has focused more on this relationship in other countries such as Britain. This research provides an opportunity to hear what both journalists and young people think about the relationship between media and young people during an Irish general election.

- All information will be kept in a password protected file on a password protected computer.

- Participant information such as name, job title and in the cases of young political candidate's age and party affiliation will be identified in published material.

- Taking part in this research is voluntary and there will be no consequences for withdrawing.

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[5] Page one of the consent form was the same for all interviewees. For this reason appendix 5a will show page one of the consent form. Appendices 5b-5k will show the second page of the consent form which was signed by all interviewees.

Appendix 4b: Consent form signed by Ciara Leonardi-Roche:[6]

- If you have any questions about this research, please contact:

- Rachel Carey: rachelcarey17@gmail.com (researcher)

- Brian Maye: bnmmaye@gmail.com (research supervisor)

- This project has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Participant Signature Ciara Leonardi-Roche

Researcher Signature

---

[6] The interviewee typed their name on the consent form as the interview was conducted over the phone and there was not access to a printer and scanner to allow the interviewee to sign their name.

Appendix 4c: Consent form signed by Claire Kerrane:[7]

- If you have any questions about this research, please contact:

- Rachel Carey: rachelcarey17@gmail.com (researcher)

- Brian Maye: bnmmaye@gmail.com (research supervisor)

- This project has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Participant Signature Claire Kerrane

Researcher Signature _Rachel Carey_

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[7] The interviewee typed their name on the consent form as the interview was conducted over the phone and there was not access to a printer and scanner to allow the interviewee to sign their name.

Appendix 4d: Consent form signed by Cormac Manning:[8]

- Participant information such as name, job title and in the cases of young political candidate's age and party affiliation will be identified in published material.

- Taking part in this research is voluntary and there will be no consequences for withdrawing.

- If you have any questions about this research, please contact:

- Rachel Carey: rachelcarey17@gmail.com (researcher)

- Brian Maye: bnmmaye@gmail.com (research supervisor)

- This project has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Participant Signature: Cormac Manning

Researcher Signature

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[8] The interviewee typed their name on the consent form as the interview was conducted over the phone and there was not access to a printer and scanner to allow the interviewee to sign their name.

Appendix 4e: Consent form signed by Lorna Bogue:

- If you have any questions about this research, please contact:

- Rachel Carey: rachelcarey17@gmail.com (researcher)

- Brian Maye: bnmmaye@gmail.com (research supervisor)

- This project has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Participant Signature _____Lorna Bogue_____ 21/07/16

Researcher Signature _____Rachel Carey_____

Appendix 4f: Consent form signed by Jack Chambers:

- If you have any questions about this research, please contact:

- Rachel Carey: rachelcarey17@gmail.com (researcher)

- Brian Maye: bnmmaye@gmail.com (research supervisor)

- This project has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Participant Signature _____ *Jack Chambers* .

Researcher Signature *Rachel Carey* _____

Appendix 4g: Consent form signed by Grace Williams:[9]

☐ Participant information such as name, job title and in the cases of young political candidate's age and party affiliation will be identified in published material.

☐ Taking part in this research is voluntary and there will be no consequences for withdrawing.

☐ If you have any questions about this research, please contact:

☐ Rachel Carey: rachelcarey17@gmail.com (researcher)

☐ Brian Maye: bnmmaye@gmail.com (research supervisor)

☐ This project has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Participant Signature_____ Grace Williams

Researcher Signature

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[9] The interviewee typed their name on the consent form as the interview was conducted over the phone and there was not access to a printer and scanner to allow the interviewee to sign their name.

Appendix 4h: Consent form signed by Patrick Martin:

- If you have any questions about this research, please contact:

- Rachel Carey: rachelcarey17@gmail.com (researcher)

- Brian Maye: bnmmaye@gmail.com (research supervisor)

- This project has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Participant Signature _____

Researcher Signature _____

Appendix 4i: Consent form signed by Colm O'Rourke:

- If you have any questions about this research, please contact:

- Rachel Carey: rachelcarey17@gmail.com (researcher)

- Brian Maye: bnmmaye@gmail.com (research supervisor)

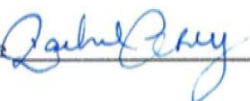- This project has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Participant Signature _____

Researcher Signature _____

Appendix 4j: Consent form signed by Hugh O' Connell:

- If you have any questions about this research, please contact:

- Rachel Carey: rachelcarey17@gmail.com (researcher)

- Brian Maye: bnmmaye@gmail.com (research supervisor)

- This project has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.
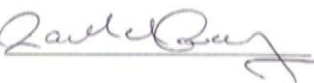
Participant Signature _____

Researcher Signature _____

Appendix 4k: Consent form signed by Gavan Reilly:

- If you have any questions about this research, please contact:

- Rachel Carey: rachelcarey17@gmail.com (researcher)

- Brian Maye: bnmmaye@gmail.com (research supervisor)

- This project has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Participant Signature _____ GAVAN REILLY
15/7/16

Researcher Signature _____

Appendix 5: Audio files of all interviews conducted.

Please find enclosed two CDs containing the recordings of all the interviews conducted for the process of this research. CD one audio files correspond to the list below:

1. Ciara Leonardi-Roche
2. Claire Kerrane
3. Lorna Bogue
4. Cormac Manning
5. Grace Williams

CD two audio files correspond to the list below:

1. Patrick Martin and Colm O'Rourke
2. Jack Chambers
3. Hugh O'Connell
4. Gavan Reilly