



## Migrant Youth Identities in Post-Referendum Scotland



*Talking identity:* Research team members, volunteers and youth participants at Castlemilk Complex, Glasgow in March 2016 for the last workshop in the Migrant Youth Identities in Post-Referendum Scotland programme.

This programme explored migrant youth identities in post-referendum Scotland. The programme brought together academics and stakeholders, including migrant youths, concerned with research and work on immigration and migrant integration, youth studies, youth media and cultural communications. Migration specialists met with social media practitioners, and youth organisations engaged with academic research in a new blend of scholarship and practicality that sought to reflect the digital, connected world in which we now live. The project ran workshops and outreach activities. Practical activities included generating three videos capturing different voices and perspectives of migrant young people. The agencies the project worked with most closely were [SCORE Scotland \(Edinburgh\)](#), [Afghan United \(Glasgow\)](#) and [Bigg Taj and the Young People Army](#). Materials from the project, including the videos, were also disseminated from a dedicated website, <https://expressyourselfscotland.org/>.

### Background

The lowering of the voting age to 16 for the Scottish Referendum in 2014 was a catalyst to raising the agentic profile of young people in Scotland. This project was particularly interested in exploring how migrant young people viewed themselves in an increasingly diverse and changing Scotland. Did they feel included and part of that change? Did they know how to contribute to change and to have their voices heard? What were some of the emerging findings from the range of research and practice relating to migrant young people?



Film crew working on the Bigg Taj video

There were two parts to the Project:

- Enabling space for those engaged in research from a range of disciplines, both in the UK and internationally, and those engaged in work with migrant young people to meet, share and develop collaborations and synergies
- Working with groups of young people who (self) identify as migrants to capture some of their views on their identity and experiences (both enabling and disabling)

Both the above would shape future areas of research as well as provide information to policy makers and practitioners about migrant youth matters.

### **Lessons from research workshops and youth activities**

- It was noted that, in research terms, young people are routinely misunderstood and overlooked. In this area again, this is evidently the case. In addition, migration is poorly defined (nationality? length of stay?) meaning there is little reliable evidence currently available from existing datasets.
- It was agreed by the research team that, going forward, a participative programme would be developed in which young people would be co-producers of the research.
- Key issues were identified that held particular significance for this group of subjects including the need to study both offline and online worlds to understand how identities are expressed; the importance of ethnicity, religion, family and personal geography in defining belonging; acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of migrants (asylum-seekers, refugees, variations in age groups, etc) and the ubiquity of misrecognition and misrepresentation and the media's role in these processes.
- It was understood that young people valued having safe spaces to speak about who they were, to explore issues of identities as well as to discuss difficult and sometimes controversial issues e.g. religion and sexual orientation/identity. The young people we

consulted were keen to continue to have safe spaces where they could be themselves, relax with others who were like them but also find out how they could make a difference for themselves but also for their wider networks of family, friends and community. Most were not sure how they could exercise their rights to make such a difference.

- Lack of finance curtailed opportunities to take part in extra curricular activities and to engage with wider social networks. Young people valued the organisations that provided them activities and opportunities to interact with their peers.
- While young migrants were often technology savvy, many did not interact with the project Blog or Facebook other than where they featured. This raised questions as to whether young people are generally only interested in interacting and sharing posts where they themselves were part of the initiatives. Given that the videos have received nearly 1,000 views, we ask if the visible medium is a key way to interact in the future, particularly where it involves speakers for whom English is not the first language.
- Young people used a range of indicators to discuss their identity from their place of birth, religion, ethnicity and nationality to indicators connected to culture such as music, arts and social issues. Young people do not adopt a Census framework of identities and their representations are far more fluid and eclectic.

What is less clear is whether the way in which young people present themselves online is the same as the way in which they construct an identity online. It is also not known which parts of identity are enabled or disabled by the young people themselves or by others. We explored a range of innovative methodologies that would allow us to capture and analyse useful data on this important cohort.

## **Technical outputs**

Mapping the landscape has produced two outputs that may be useful to those interested in engaging in quantitative or qualitative research related to migrant young people. Neither outputs are comprehensive but provide a starter list for those interested. These will be available on the Sull site from the July 1 2016 and will also be hosted on the site of the Centre for Education for Racial Equality in Scotland (CERES), University of Edinburgh.

### *Output 1: Migrant Youth Identity - Quantitative Secondary Datasets*

This output highlights all large social survey datasets available in the UK that might be used for studying young people, social attitudes, and/or migrant identities. The project team provides a brief outline of selected surveys and their possible relevance to studying youth, immigration/migration, ethnicity, citizenship and social attitudes.

### *Output 2: Research on migrant young people from 2000 onwards*

This output provides a brief review of literature conducted both in the UK and elsewhere on young migrant identities. Information is given on 48 selected studies.

## Follow-on research

Several academic and field collaborations have emerged:

*University of Edinburgh and University of Glasgow: ESRC Impact Accelerator Award.* From the workshop, it was clear that there were similar issues emerging from the range of research conducted on black and minority ethnic young people as well as on migrant young people. Issues such as misrecognition, experiences of being 'other', issues of language and fewer social networks and capital were some emerging themes. As a result, Dr Rowena Arshad (UoE) and Dr Marta Moskal (Glasgow University) put in a joint bid for an ESRC IAA grant. The project planned to look at the experiences of minority ethnic and migrant young people in Scotland – lessons for education practitioners, youth workers and policy makers. This application was successful. The bid involved partnerships with six local authorities through the UoE Teacher Education Partnership, YouthLink Scotland, the Educational Institute of Scotland and the Scottish Youth Parliament. The project commenced in March and will conclude by the end of October 2016. The project will, among other outcomes,

- Provide a briefing of key findings related to young people from racial, ethnic and religious minoritised communities tailored for teachers and those working with young people in terms of implication for practice.
- Discuss emerging research issues so that young people can improve their own agency on influencing policy and practice. The session outcomes will be used to inform the workshops/webinar with practitioners and other key stakeholders.
- Run workshops for practitioners e.g. teachers, youth workers to accelerate the lessons from the research into policy and practice. Location – city (Edinburgh and Glasgow), semi-urban (Fife) and rural/islands (Inverness area).
- Provide a webinar of the workshop to prioritise participants from remote and rural areas who cannot physically come to a workshop.

*University of Stirling/Edinburgh:* The seminar series identified ideas for further work interrogating secondary survey data sets on matters related to migrants. A proposal is currently being developed with a focus on obtaining high quality evidence from quantitative data related to the experiences of minority ethnic migrant young people in the UK.

*University of Stirling, Edinburgh:* The SUII interactions across disciplines and institutions have paved the way for a project application to examine identity formation among migrant youth, in particular through the creative use of social media. Members<sup>1</sup> of the project have plans to submit a funding proposal in this area during the course of 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> The work from Arshad will draw in part from an AHRC Project led by Prof Peter Hopkins (Newcastle), co-Is Dr Guchathen Saghera (University of St Andrews), Dr Rowena Arshad (University of Edinburgh) and Kate Botterill (Research Fellow, University of Newcastle)

<https://research.ncl.ac.uk/youngpeople/outputs/workingpapers/faithethnicityandplace/>