Changing spaces: exploring the role of the internet in supporting non-heterosexual youth aged 18-25 in Ireland

# Details

## Year

2018

## Issued

2018

## Language

English

## Authors

Park K.

## Type

PhD Thesis

## Sample

128 questionnaire and 8 in depth interviews young people aged 18- 25.

# Abstract

This study used a sequential qualitatively driven design to explore non-heterosexual internet usage among 18-25 year olds in Ireland. Within the last decade there has been a growing body of research focusing on supporting sexual minority youth in Ireland and understanding their experiences, yet little is known about how they use the internet for support. Non-heterosexual youth can use the internet to access narratives and communities which previously would have required physical presence in geographical places. Considering the role that narrative plays within identity formation, the change this spatial shift has brought about in social relations offers the opportunity for a radical reshaping of both the development of identity and the opportunities for new types of identity to occur in places which they would be unlikely to occur in the past. This study has addressed the gap in literature by positioning a phenomenological sense of place at the centre of the analysis. Using a questionnaire with 126 participants along with 8 in depth narrative based interviews, the study found that non-heterosexual youth perceive the internet as highly valued for its supportive role in identity formation as well the ability to redefine norms and authenticate place for those who experience an absence of offline support.

# Outcome

The study found that non-heterosexual youth perceive the internet as highly valued for its supportive role in identity formation as well the ability to redefine norms and authenticate place for those who experience an absence of offline support. The first findings chapter provided an understanding of support and identity from participants’ perspectives, the second findings chapter outlined some of the specific ways in which internet use was valued by participants and addressed instances where this was directly tied to offline realities.The final findings chapter looked at how internet use was contextualised within the lives of 7 interview participants and it examined how and why the internet was used for authenticating place.