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Young People's Citizen Identities: A Q-Methodological Analysis of English Youth Perceptions of Citizenship in Britain

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Abstract: Since the late 1980s, successive United Kingdom (UK) governments have sought to develop initiatives designed to promote forms of “active citizenship” among young people. But despite the substantial amount of work done by social scientists on the topic of citizenship in recent decades, relatively little research work has been done in social psychology to analyse citizens’ actual understandings of citizenship, viewed in terms of membership of a political community. This article presents the findings of a Q-methodological study of how teenagers ($n = 75$) from different parts of England ($M = 17.25$ years; $SD = 1.41$) regard citizenship and construct their own identities as citizens. It sets out the three factors and four distinct stances on what it means to be a citizen that emerged in the research: The active citizen, the rooted citizen, the cosmopolitan citizen, and the secure citizen. Understanding the multiple ways in which young people construct citizenship is essential for effectively engaging with them. In this way, young citizens can be enabled to make an impact on, rather than simply being at the receiving end of, the development of citizenship policy in Britain.

Keywords: young people; citizen identity; citizenship; youth participation; Q-methodology

1. Introduction

Citizenship has come to the fore as a key concept in British politics over the past three decades. Since the late 1980s, United Kingdom (UK) governments have sought to develop initiatives designed to promote forms of “active citizenship”. Young people, in particular, have been a clear focus of policy, encouraged to be “good citizens” by engaging in activities such as volunteering, especially in the local community. An important concern of politicians and others is that if young people do not feel like stakeholders in their communities, their sense of citizenship may go “missing” [1]. The increasing prevalence of discourses of citizenship among politicians, academics, campaigners, and commentators has coincided with a significant shift at a governmental policy level towards a responsibilisation of citizenship [2], with successive governments arguing for the need for citizens to take increasing personal responsibility for their own individual educational, health, and welfare needs, and for a significantly greater role to be played by the community (or communities) rather than the state in addressing various social problems. Such voluntary and community service is viewed as a crucial means of enhancing social cohesion. As regards young people, the focus on the inculcation of the responsibilities of citizenship has also extended to forms of political participation such as voting and engaging in party politics [3].

This emphasis can be seen across a range of policies, from the then Conservative Home Secretary Douglas Hurd’s “active citizenship” initiative and its concern with the “diffusion of power”,

“civic obligation”, and “voluntary service” [4] (p. 14); to Labour’s compulsory introduction of citizenship lessons in secondary schools in England in 2002 and its clear stress on volunteering [5–9]; to the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government’s “Big Society” initiative [10] and the accompanying National Citizen Service [11,12] (which continues to be promoted by the current single party, minority Conservative government), in which young people are encouraged to undertake a variety of community projects. Young people are often seen by policymakers and scholars as citizens of the future, or “citizens in the making”, as the sociologist T.H. Marshall put it in his influential 1950 essay outlining a tripartite schema of civil, political, and social rights, *Citizenship and Social Class* [13] (p. 25). This categorization of young people as “not-yet-citizens” is problematic from the point of view of them “being treated with equality in terms of membership in society”, with young people “positioned as the passive recipients of citizenship policy rather than as active citizens in their own right” [14] (p. 642). In our view, an inclusive conception of citizenship demands that the perspectives of young people themselves must be heard.

Moreover, despite the great interest in citizenship shown by different governments, the concept has historically been a rather unfamiliar one in the British context, with individuals often having been viewed by constitutional experts not as citizens, but instead as “subjects” of the crown. In the contemporary literature, citizenship is frequently defined in terms of an individual’s membership of a state or of a political community of some kind and their legal and moral rights against, and duties towards, the state and indeed other citizens [15] (p. xix) [16] (p. 166). Citizenship is widely viewed as an “essentially contested concept” [17] (p. 10) [18] (p. 3) [7] (p. 39) [19] (p. 3) [20] (p. 82). It may be seen as “a multi-layered construct” [21] (p. 117) [22], and indeed some postmodern thinkers have been concerned with deconstructing citizenship, examining the signs and symbols that they argue give the concept meaning [23]. Certainly, citizenship “is not an eternal essence but a cultural artefact. It is what people make of it” [24] (p. 11) and it has “multiple meanings” [24] (p. 13), giving rise to a variety of different perspectives. For Isin and Turner, citizenship ought to be conceptualized in a contemporary context more widely than just a narrow focus on legal rights, but rather as a dynamic, active practice, a struggle for rights at particular times in specific circumstances, “a social process through which individuals and social groups engage in claiming, expanding or losing rights”, which leads “to a sociologically informed definition of citizenship in which the emphasis is less on legal rules and more on norms, practices, meanings and identities” [25] (p. 4).

Researchers in the discipline of social psychology have the potential to contribute significantly to such a conceptualisation, particularly given their pioneering work developing concepts such as social identity, prosocial behaviour, interpersonal citizenship behaviour, and organizational citizenship. Indeed, the preoccupations of citizenship scholars can also be seen to relate quite closely to the interests of social and community psychologists who seek to understand the individual-group-society nexus [26], and whose research includes work on, for example, “group cohesion, intergroup conflict, prejudice and discrimination, quality of life, social justice and legitimacy, [and] self-regulation” [27] (p. 196). However, as Stevenson et al. pointed out in their introduction to a recent special thematic section in a social psychology journal on “The Social Psychology of Citizenship, Participation and Social Exclusion”, despite the “explosion of research on the topic of citizenship across the social sciences” over the past few decades, only “a ripple” has “passed through the discipline of social psychology” [28] (p. 1). They went on to conclude in their accompanying paper to sum up the special edition that: “Our review of a range of psychological approaches to citizenship . . . is best characterised by the study of the constructive, active and collective (but often exclusive) understandings of citizenship in people’s everyday lives” [29] (p. 203) [30–42]. In this vein, our aim is to further develop an understanding of citizenship by exploring these understandings of citizenship in people’s everyday lives, as constructed by the citizens themselves.

In our view, those psychologists who have addressed the concept are right to argue that citizenship ought to be viewed both as a political concept and also a psychosocial concept, one that can be explored through an analysis of an individual’s sense of self and his or her place in a community or society [43].

In order to develop such a psychological understanding, it is essential to gain significant purchase on what citizenship means to citizens themselves and, in particular, to develop a ground-up understanding of citizens' views that moves the analysis beyond a discussion of the two core traditions of liberal and republican citizenship that often dominate work in this area, with the former emphasizing citizens' rights and the latter their civic duties [44] (p. 254), but which are of only limited use in understanding citizens' actual constructions of citizenship, which may not fit neatly with these ideal-type theoretical perspectives [40,42].

This article is concerned with uncovering the varied perspectives on citizenship of teenagers in England today [45] (p. 2). Utilising a Q-methodology approach to analysing subjectivities or, more precisely, intersubjectivities, we investigated the different ways in which young people understand citizenship and construct their own identities as citizens. Whereas top-down approaches reify citizenship by abstracting from citizens' real, lived experiences, the approach adopted here is significant because it offers a ground-up perspective on understanding young people's different constructions of citizenship, based on their own particular experiences and meanings.

2. Method

2.1. Utilising Q-Methodology

Q-methodology was designed to study the different subjective viewpoints across a group on a particular issue [46]. Q-methodology is both a quantitative and qualitative approach [47,48]. The research participants (*P*-set) articulated their understanding of citizenship in Britain by "sorting" items (*Q*-items). This sorting required participants to rank-order the *Q*-items (56 statements on a scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"), thus enabling participants to impose meaning and significance onto them [49] (p. 209). These sorted items were then examined using the quantitative method of factor analysis, which allocated individuals with similar sorting patterns into the same group, thereby identifying the major perspectives on the topic. The qualitative aspect of Q-methodology involved examining how groups of participants organized the *Q*-item-sample statements and how different individuals' particular perspectives clustered around the different discourses identified [50] (pp. 98–117) [49] (p. 210).

2.2. Participants

Q-methodology does not require demographic representativeness because it is not aiming at making demographic generalisations. Participants were recruited utilising the researchers' networks and snowballing. The *P*-set comprised 85 participants of whom 75 completed the task fully (male = 41, female = 34; age *M* = 17.25 years, *SD* = 1.41; the 10 other participants' *Q*-sorts were excluded from further analysis because of incomplete data). The *P*-set were recruited from a variety of educational providers and locations in England, targeted to incorporate different views from a diverse sample of members of the group of interest—young people. Twenty-two participants were from Lincolnshire, nine were from Greater Manchester, nine were from Yorkshire; eight were from County Durham, six were from London, five were from Nottinghamshire, five were from Somerset, three were from Bristol, and one was from each of the following: Tyne and Wear, Glamorgan, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, the West Midlands, Norfolk, Hertfordshire, and Derbyshire. From the information provided, 62.7% (47) were in full-time education, 21.3% (16) were in education and part-time work, 2.7% (two) were unemployed, and 13.3% (ten) did not respond to this question. Their ethnicity was 70.7% (53) White (British, Irish, Other), 6.6% (five) Asian (Pakistani, Bangladeshi, or South Asian), 4.0% (three) Black (Caribbean, African), 8.0% (six) Mixed, 1.3% (one) Chinese or Other, and 9.3% (seven) did not respond. Sixty-two participants stated that they were British (including five who were not born in Britain). Two people said that they were not British, one of whom was born in Britain, and 11 did not state their nationality.

2.3. Materials

The *P*-set were the “makers of the meaning” of the citizenship phenomenon under investigation, and it was ensured that “the flow of communicability surrounding any topic [in] the ordinary conversation, commentary, and discourse of everyday life” [50] (p. 94) was available to them so that they could express themselves. This was achieved by assembling the “concourse” (this comes from the Latin “concursum” and means “a running together”) [50] (p. 94), which included the ideas, expressions, opinions, and general “chatter” about the issue being investigated. From the initial concourse, a Q-sample was put together.

To ensure that the concourse collected the major themes of citizenship, a range of sources (e.g. academic literature, newspapers, magazines, television programmes, internet sites, and other media outlets) were examined. Since the aim of generating a concourse of statements was to gather as many ideas that could be expressed about citizenship as possible, the exclusion or inclusion criterion was whether the statements could be meaningfully and coherently related to citizenship. The initial concourse (>600 statements) was distilled into the Q-item-sample ($n = 56$ statements) to form the materials for the study (see Appendix A, Table A1). Content and thematic analysis [51] were used to ensure that the Q-item-sample statements were representative and comprehensive of the concourse [50]. The content analysis entailed categorising each Q-item-sample statement by its perceived theme. Each Q-item statement was analysed to make sure it expressed only one recognizable assertion about the nature of citizenship, thereby ensuring that participants could express clearly and decisively their opinion about the statement. This content analysis procedure resulted in a number of categories being constructed. Each category was then analysed to reduce the population of Q-item statements into a manageable Q-item-sample, ensuring that all of the ideas contained in the category were represented. Replication was eliminated, as were Q-item statements that were not specifically focused on the social-personal aspects of being a citizen. An original sample of statements was then piloted on seven first-year undergraduates, chosen because they were still of a similar age to the target *P*-set and for their ability to recommend appropriate modifications to the Q-item-sample statements. The pilot study ensured the clarity of the materials and that only one theme was being expressed in a statement. The statements were then typed onto individual cards protected by plastic shields and given a random identification number.

2.4. Procedure

Participants carried out the task in the presence of a responsible figure (their teacher, tutor, or primary carer) and one researcher (Criminal Records Bureau checked). Participants volunteered to take part and were told that the purpose of the research was to find out about young people’s views of being a citizen in Britain, and specifically they were asked to consider the task in terms of: “What does being a ‘citizen’ mean?” and “What does ‘citizenship’ mean to you?” The young people were told:

We are seeking your views about being a citizen in Britain. We are interested in your feelings about such things as your rights, privileges, obligations and duties as members of society. You will be given a number of cards with statements on them about being a citizen. Then you will be asked to sort out these statements according to how much you agree or disagree with them.

Participants ranked the set of 56 Q-item-sample statements on a fixed quasi-normal distribution that varied between -5 (“strongly disagree”) to $+5$ (“strongly agree”) (see Figure 1). The ranking criterion was the extent to which they felt the statement described their view of being a citizen. Sorting of Q-item-sample statements was self-paced and performed individually by each participant. All 56 statements had to be used.

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
(2)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(7)	(6)	(5)	(4)	(2)
Strongly					Strongly					
Disagree					Agree					

averaged, and compared again to the observed eigenvalues [53]. Figure 3 (and Table 1) show the comparison between the eigenvalues from the actual observed data set and the randomly generated data set.

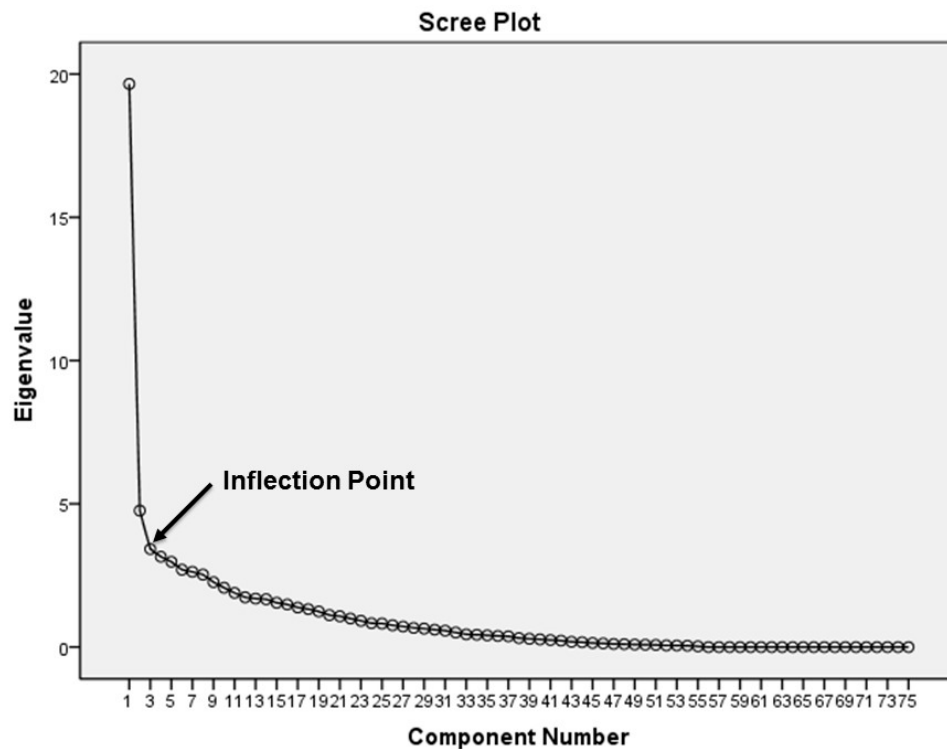


Figure 2. Eigenvalues plotted against component numbers in the scree plot of 75 citizenship Q-sorts, highlighting an inflection point around components 2–4.

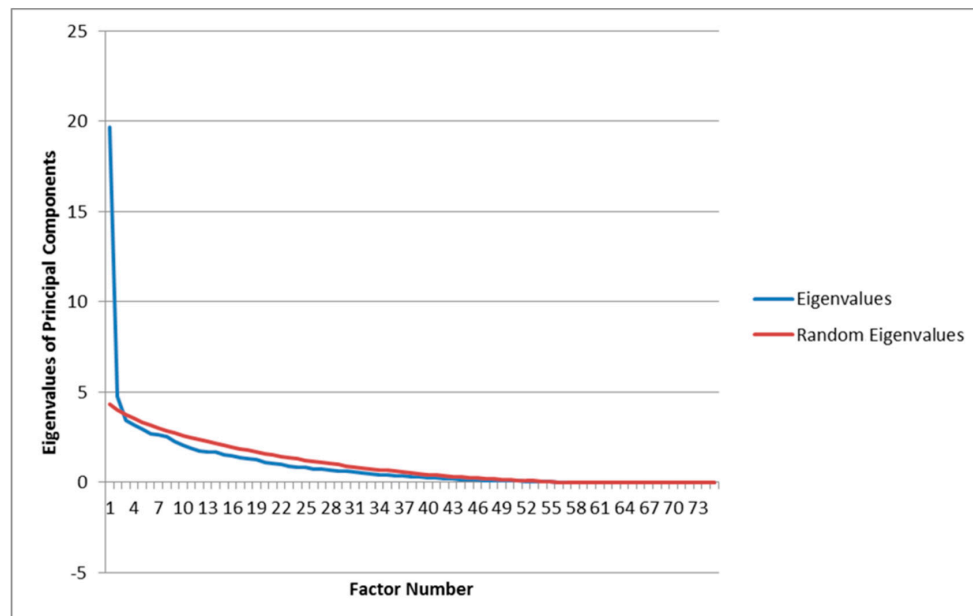


Figure 3. The scree plot and the parallel analysis (random data at 95th percentile).

Figure 3 and Table 1 identify two factors for retention from the parallel analysis, since two of the observed eigenvalues exceeded their randomly generated counterpart's eigenvalues. Looking at the

scree test and the parallel analysis together suggests a minimum of two and a maximum of four factors for extraction.

Table 1. Parallel analysis of observed eigenvalues and eigenvalues generated from a random data set (95th percentile) (rounded up to two decimal places).

Factor	Observed Eigenvalues (Unrotated)	Random Eigenvalues
1	19.66	4.33
2	4.76	3.99
3	3.42	3.74
4	3.15	3.53
5	2.98	3.34
6	2.70	3.18
7	2.63	3.01
8	2.53	2.87
9	2.27	2.74

3.2. Factor Extraction

In order to be able to decide whether to extract two, three, or four factors, the PCQ for windows academic edition programme was used. This is a commercial programme that is designed especially for analysing data using Q-methodology [61]. The centroid method was used with varimax rotation. This is one of the most common [62] and preferred factor analytical choices for Q-methodologists [63,64], as the “indeterminacy of the centroid solution”, whereby “there is not one best solution but instead an infinite number of possible solutions”, combined “with the ability to consider abductive reasoning and scientific inquiry” can be seen to “best fit the idea of seeking operant subjectivity and offering Q as a methodology for subjective science” [63] (p. 76). Three criteria were used to inform the decision.

1. *P*-set representativeness: So as to achieve representativeness, as many of the Q-sorts as is reasonable should be retained. The number of participants that contributed to each factor was dependent on whether a participant’s Q-sort contributed in a significant way to a single factor, namely whether the participant’s Q-sort was “saturated” with a factor [65] (p. 213) or “loading” on a factor [65] (pp. 211–213). A solution was sought that retained at least 50% of the participants loading significantly and exclusively on a single factor (this equated to a loading of 0.34 or above, or $p < 0.01$).
2. Parsimony: To achieve this, a solution that explained as much of the variance with as few factors as possible was sought.
3. Distinctiveness: Factors that offered a unique understanding of citizenship and facilitated “interpretability” qualified for retention [53]. This was indicated by the extent to which a factor was constructed by Q-item-sample statements that significantly distinguished it from other factors.

The PCQ was then used to extract two, three, and four factors, with each solution examined against the three criteria of representativeness, parsimony, and distinctiveness. The three-factor solution was accepted over the two-factor and four-factor solutions. The three-factor solution accounted for 35% of the variance: 40 (53.3%) of the Q-sorts were retained, and all three factors were constructed with Q-item-sample statements that were uniquely distinct to them (see Table 2). Although both the three-factor and two-factor solutions retained 40 of the Q-sorts, the three-factor solution accounted for more of the variance (35% compared to 31%), and the three factors were made up of multiple distinguishing statements. The four-factor solution was rejected not only due to it failing to satisfy the representativeness criterion, but also because of its lower number of distinguishing Q-item-sample statements. Appendix B (Table A2) provides the loading for each participant contributing to the three factors. A single Q-sort was generated for each factor by merging all the Q-sorts that loaded significantly (a loading of 0.34 equated to $p < 0.01$) and exclusively on a given factor. When a factor consisted of positive and negative loadings, a mirror Q-sort was created to record both stances in this

factor (indicated by ‘1’ or ‘2’), if there were two or more negative loadings. Appendix A identifies the three factors and four stances on citizenship in Britain.

Table 2. Three-factor solution (varimax rotation): Eigenvalues, variance, number of Q-sorts retained, and number of statements distinguishing each factor.

	Factors		
	1	2	3
Eigenvalue	12.45	7.56	6.01
% Variance explained	17	10	8
Number of Q-sorts accounted for	18	16	6
Number of items distinguishing the factor from all other factors	13	8	7

3.3. Articulating the Citizen Stances

Detailed accounts are presented below for each of the four different stances (1, 2A, 2B, 3). These were constructed by examining the ratings of Q-item-sample statements in relation to the other statements within the stance. When looked at holistically, the configuration of the statements described a stance on citizenship, so it is their relative positions that mattered within the entire sort and not just the individual statements themselves. As such, the accounts set out below are based on the participants’ organisation of a linguistic repertoire (the Q-item-sample statements). A brief summary of the four stances is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Profile sketches of young people’s four stances on being a citizen in Britain. The accounts of the stances are presented in the first person as if someone is describing their particular perspective on citizenship.

Factors (First Person Profile)	
<i>Factor 1: The Active Citizen</i>	
“I feel I am a member of my community and society. But this sense of belonging is not really due to being born here. What really makes me a citizen is that we, and I obviously include myself, accept certain ways of living and being with other people in this country. These ways of being with our fellow citizens are not decided by any one person or group; it is more of a process that just develops out of the things we do as individuals, groups and communities. And this means respecting the laws, being dutiful and respectful to each other, and being willing to engage and contribute to society.”	
<i>Factor 2: The Rooted/Cosmopolitan Citizen</i>	
<i>Stance 2A: The Rooted Citizen</i>	<i>Stance 2B: The Cosmopolitan Citizen</i>
“There is such a thing as a British citizen. In a sense, you just have to look at how the older generation are to know what it is. When you look at them you become aware that being a citizen in this country is about embracing certain core values and lifestyles. To me that means you shouldn’t be dependent, or think you have a God-given right to state benefits. The way society is, everyone has opportunities to get by. So, for me, that’s the only fundamental thing you have a right to as a citizen of this country—life chances.”	“I feel very comfortable being in the presence of people who look different to me, sound different to me, and have different lifestyles to me, and, within reason, their own values. Embracing and living in a mixture of diverse cultures is what being a citizen of this country is all about. But for our multicultural society to really work best, I think we as a society need to focus less on generating wealth, and more on other things. For instance, we all need to find some rights that are acceptable to us all; such a state of affairs can only be achieved by negotiation between us. Being a British citizen is about being connected. Citizenship to me is about building good relations, respect, and cooperation between people.”
<i>Factor 3: The Secure Citizen</i>	
“I think I am an integral part of society, just as much as any other person or group, because society recognises me and the group I belong to, and looks after my needs and concerns. I think my requirements are in line with what society or what my community deems desirable. I feel completely at home in society. I know the rules of social and cultural life. I feel others are fellow citizens too, not strangers, and therefore will act accordingly. As such, I don’t think material inequality within society is an issue of major concern that needs some form of intervention. There is a fundamental civic spirit that means people won’t always put their own needs first, even though we know that there are overall ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ in our community and society.”	

3.4. The Three Factors

3.4.1. Factor 1: The Active Citizen

The active citizen has a sense that simply being a British citizen transcends any geographical or regional argument about their status. If someone is a British citizen, he or she is a legitimate citizen of the country. Kilby, Horowitz, and Hylton argue that part of defining one's citizenship in terms of geographical and historical antecedents is to construct others as strangers and thus to raise concerns about their rights and privileges [66]. Such arguments rest on a "blood and soil" reasoning by associating people with specific territories. The active citizen, in contrast, looks to foster productive interactions and prioritises a duty of care to others over other concerns:

22*	I think you are a citizen of this country only if you were born here.	−5
44*	Being a citizen just means you have things like a passport, birth certificate, and/or an identity card connecting you to this country.	−2
5.	I am prepared to make self-sacrifices for the good of all.	3
50*	I am an individual and not a member of any community or society.	−3

Indeed, this sense of care is buttressed by a positive view of the value of reciprocity and engagement between citizens:

38*	Only a fool would do unpaid work and that's what voluntary work ultimately is.	−5
43*	I think it is in the interests of our community that people who need more support should be given more.	4
2*	The world is too dangerous for me to be thinking about anyone else other than myself.	−4

Here, elements of a republican, participatory citizen [67] are being expressed, as well as the "effortful citizen" who makes a positive effort to bring about desired outcomes [68]. The nature of being a citizen is thus characterised in the following statements:

56*	I think the most important thing for us is to have a system that is built on ensuring fairness and justice between citizens.	5
51*	To respect others is the most important feature of being a citizen of this society.	4
33*	Being a member of society is all about us discussing and deciding together how we should live.	2
23*	People have to respect the law even if it is against what they believe is right.	1

Taken together, these statements narrate a constructed affiliation, with citizenship viewed as an active process of negotiation and consensus building about social norms, rules, and practices. This is what Condor identifies as sense-making, cultural practice, and normative equality [27]. Through this consensual binding agreement, a "thick" citizenship is voiced [27] based on constructive social participation and responsible engagement in one's community via the "social-contractual" aspects of citizenship [69]. A communitarian theme is also present, in which individual identity is bound up with community membership and where the answer given by the active citizen to the question, "Who belongs?" [27] is "those that accept that the basis of living together is developed by negotiation, compromise and consensus". This citizenship perspective is oriented towards individuals, groups, and communities creating and controlling their situations. Interventions can, and should, be enacted so as not to restrict the rightful pursuit of individual ways of living:

18*	I believe all citizens of this country should have certain basic rights which should be guaranteed.	5
10*	A country that cares too much for its people restricts its people.	−2
39*	A person's private life should be of no concern to society.	1

3.4.2. Factor 2, Stance 2A: The Rooted Citizen

For the rooted citizen, there is an understanding that there are some behaviours and characteristics that define what being a British citizen means:

8.	There are certain things I feel we shouldn't do because it wouldn't be British.	5
11.	I don't think we should be giving money to people who choose to live in a way that we wouldn't live.	4

This stance incorporates a sense of a distinctive British citizenship, expressed by devotion to and support for Britain and an idealistic view of the older generation that can be interpreted in this context as a reverence for the past:

3*	When older people say we should be good citizens what they really mean is that we should act and think like them.	3
39.	A person's private life should be of no concern to society.	−4

This rooted citizen stance expresses a distinctive, essentialist perspective on citizenship, which alludes to both prescriptive and proscriptive norms and standards. Medin and Ortony regard psychological essentialism as a reasoning heuristic [70]. They suggest that essentialism is a “placeholder” notion: One can believe that a category possesses an essence without knowing what that essence is. For the rooted citizen, older people are understood as placeholders, living representations of British citizenship. Another characteristic that is articulated in this stance is that of self-sufficiency. Citizenship is viewed as being about citizens getting on with things and displaying fortitude:

42*	I think the most important thing for us to have is a system that is built on developing caring relationships between citizens.	−3
6*	We all have a responsibility to look after the less well-off in our community and society.	−3

For this stance, then, acceptable societal conditions need to be in place that offer sufficient means by which people are able to take care of themselves, while the government must not be too overbearing so as to inculcate a dependency culture among citizens:

47*	The government cares more about helping businesses make money than about my needs as a citizen.	−4
10.	A country that cares too much for its people restricts its people.	2

A corollary of this is the idea of “performing” citizenship, whereby rights and other privileges have to be earned:

28*	What people are entitled to should depend on what they do for their country.	4
25.	Being a citizen of this country is a privilege people have to earn.	3

The citizen, in this stance, is understood as being situated in a merit-based system, in which hard work and talent allows them to climb the ladder of success. With the notion of earned, not privileged, entitlements, the idea of meritocracy is appealing for this stance since it carries with it the idea of moving beyond where one starts in life, of creative flourishing and fairness. The rooted citizen stance can be seen as containing within it elements of what has been described as a “neoliberal citizen” perspective, with “neoliberalism” defined as an ideology that “represents a theory of political and economic practices that extend market rationality and values to nearly every sphere of human activity” [71] (p. 393). The notion of a citizen being self-reliant, productive, and having the ability to

succeed (in neoliberal terms), combined with support for only very limited government intervention in society and minimal citizen entitlements, can be seen as promoting the conditions necessary for the neoliberal citizen-subject to exist. Unlike contemporary liberal and republican definitions of citizenship, in this stance there is little articulation of a shared common interest among citizens.

3.4.3. Factor 2, Stance 2B: The Cosmopolitan Citizen

The cosmopolitan citizen rejects the notion that there are distinctive, unambiguous features that demarcate British citizenship:

8.	There are certain things I feel we shouldn't do because it wouldn't be British.	−5
28.	What people are entitled to should depend on what they do for their country.	−4

Indeed, the view expressed is that society is pluralistic, embracing multiculturalism or polyculturalism [72,73], where certain inalienable rights that are associated with the notion of citizenship are regarded as essential:

18.	I believe all citizens of this country should have certain basic rights which should be guaranteed.	5
25.	Being a citizen of this country is a privilege people have to earn.	−3

This stance is in keeping with what McKinley identifies as a cosmopolitan obligation based on Kantian hospitality: The basic moral respect owed to all persons given our common humanity [74]. Here, then, there are no all-encompassing values that can necessarily supersede the right of people to live according to their own lifestyle choices. Consequently, this citizen stance is critical of unfettered, free-market economics, with its competitive and profit-driven ethos:

47.	The government cares more about helping businesses make money than about my needs as a citizen.	4
21.	The UK is full of 'opportunists'—people taking selfish advantage of circumstances.	2

With the rejection of a distinctive British citizenship, and human and civil rights regarded as transcending any rooted claims of this kind, the question of what ties this perspective together arises. For this stance, there is no alignment with a national identity:

45.	Being a British citizen means we should do certain things.	−3
40.	I feel a very strong tie to this country.	−3

Moreover, the underlying social system, for this stance, is implicated in the understanding of citizenship advanced:

42.	I think the most important thing for us to have is a system that is built on developing caring relationships between citizens.	3
56.	I think the most important thing for us is to have a system that is built on ensuring fairness and justice between citizens.	5

With this emphasis on a social system that fosters interconnectedness, this stance puts forward a conception of citizenship that is concerned with the promotion of the common interest:

38.	Only a fool would do unpaid work and that's what voluntarily work ultimately is.	−4
2.	The world is too dangerous for me to be thinking about anyone else other than myself.	−5

Osler and Starkey [75] (p. 246) describe an understanding of citizenship held by some, in which they “[know] their interests are tied up with others, not because they share a common national citizenship, but because they may be members of a diasporic group, [and] have a common faith or political agenda, or live in a particular neighbourhood”, and such an understanding perhaps reflects the experiences and concerns of the cosmopolitan citizen. The themes articulated within this stance can be summarised as “post-national” [27]. Citizenship is viewed as being about “the cultural politics of everyday life” [43] and is defined as social practice, “(re)constituting norms which regulate public life” [32] (p. 190). The cosmopolitan citizen advances an understanding of citizenship that contains community sentiments, but which also expresses a wider social consciousness.

3.4.4. Factor 3: The Secure Citizen

Lister points out that citizenship is both an inclusionary and exclusionary concept [76] (p. 3). For this stance, the construction of being a citizen expresses a sense of empowerment within society:

14*	I am aware of the ‘rules of the game’ in terms of what is expected of me as a citizen of this country.	3
17.	Every citizen has the chance to influence the development of their society.	3

Vrooman and Hoff see social exclusion as a multidimensional concept, such that when an individual or group experiences several of these dimensions simultaneously, then they are being socially excluded [77]. One of these elements of social exclusion is a lack of normative integration. The statements above show the opposite: An enabled citizen who can correctly interpret the standards of society. Furthermore, statements 30 and 13 (below) show that the secure citizen experiences some degree of interpersonal connectedness, which again opposes the notion of being socially marginalised, another aspect of social exclusion [77]:

30.	I have personal needs and goals that clash with being a member of my community.	−3
13*	If I was in trouble and needed help, I feel someone who could help me would help me.	2

For this citizenship stance, a sense of being in a stable and safe place in mainstream society is understood in terms of an expectation of society and individuals:

1*	In the interests of society, the state should control its citizens in some ways.	5
34*	We need to have a better balance between people’s rights in society and people’s responsibilities to society.	4
54*	All I expect the government to do is to make sure I can fulfil my needs and pursue my interests.	−4

The secure citizen identity being articulated here feels at ease and at home in society:

2.	The world is too dangerous for me to be thinking about anyone else other than myself.	−5
9*	To be called a citizen of this country means nothing to me.	−4

In this stance, an assured citizenship is being expressed and the construction of being a citizen is seen as being fully able to deal with the demands of society:

31*	I think for our community’s well-being we must have a system that takes from the rich and gives to the poor.	−5
6.	We all have a responsibility to look after the less well-off in our community and society.	−2

In summary, the construction of being a citizen in this position can be seen to address the desire element of identity, the desire for recognition (acknowledgement), association (affiliation), and protection (security) [78].

4. Discussion

This article has presented the findings of a Q-methodological study of how young people in England understand citizenship in Britain. In so doing, the article has demonstrated Q-methodology's very clear strengths as an approach for analysing subjective viewpoints, applying this methodology to an important area it has rarely been used to examine before. Despite the plethora of UK government initiatives on citizenship, in particular, directed at young people, insufficient emphasis has been placed on ascertaining the perspectives of young people themselves. In rejecting an *a priori* conceptualization of citizenship, this article set out the ways in which young people defined their identities as citizens. For Harré, one requirement for a science is that it should be concerned with "the identification, individuation and classification of the phenomena of the domain of interest" [79] (p. 4). This research, utilising Q-methodology, conducted such an identification, individuation, and classification process, in which three factors comprising four stances emerged on what it means to be a citizen for the young people in our sample. The research suggests not only that simplistic, top-down approaches advanced by governments (and others) may make it hard for them to relate to young people, but also that understanding the multiple ways in which young people construct citizenship may make possible a more consequential and effective engagement with them that is attuned to their particular experiences and meanings. Such understanding and engagement is essential as a means of ensuring that young people are able to make an impact on, rather than simply being at the receiving end of, the development of citizenship policy in Britain.

4.1. Future Work

An interesting finding of this study was that the different positions described above drew on different aspects of liberal, republican, and communitarian normative theories of citizenship but did not fit neatly with these ideal-type theoretical perspectives. They also drew on considerations not necessarily captured by these three theories. In our view, this is an important point that needs to be borne in mind when designing policy that seeks to promote particular attitudes and behaviour among young people, for example through citizenship classes in schools.

One way forward might be to develop a position-preference type questionnaire that connects the stances outlined to both personal and social factors so as to enable an analysis of the conditions under which different understandings of citizenship are invoked or are possible. Such a questionnaire could be very usefully deployed in citizenship lessons, enabling young people to gain a fuller appreciation of themselves as citizens and aiding the facilitation of the development of the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes they need to engage in civic and political activity so as to address important issues of concern to them. Such an idea is in many respects similar to that employed in the positive psychology approach of Park, Peterson, and Seligman, who initially identified 24 different character strengths and then sought to devise strategies to help people recognise and develop their strengths further [80].

4.2. Limitations

The use of Q-methodology does not lead to the production of statistically generalizable results across populations, but rather the positions uncovered are themselves generalisations about the universe of discourse [81] (p. 534). We do not claim that the factors and stances identified are exhaustive of all the possibilities of young people's understandings of citizenship. Nor do the findings provide general demographic information in relation to young people's citizen identities. Future work is needed to further understand these stances in relation to particular contexts. The stances could be investigated in terms of, for example, the impact of gender, class, sexuality, and ethnicity, so as to take

the essentially contested concept of citizenship and place that abstraction, now given some descriptive form, in a context.

5. Conclusions

Q-methodology was used to provide detailed typologies of the different subjective viewpoints on citizenship in Britain across a group of young people in England. The ground-up perspective captured some of the complexity of these different viewpoints and drew attention to the significantly different perspectives on citizenship held by the young people. Four distinct accounts were constructed that captured the different stances. These were named the active citizen, the rooted citizen, the cosmopolitan citizen, and the secure citizen. These findings have wide-ranging implications, not least for educators involved in teaching citizenship, but they can also serve as a warning to policy makers and others not to adopt oversimplified, top-down constructs of citizenship.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Q-item-sample statement array for the three factors (one contains different stances).

No.	Q-Statement	Factors			
		Factor 1	Factor 2		Factor 3
			Stance 2A	Stance 2B	
1.	In the interests of society, the state should control its citizens in some ways.	−1	1	−1	5
2.	The world is too dangerous for me to be thinking about anyone else other than myself.	−4	5	−5	−5
3.	When older people say we should be good citizens what they really mean is that we should act and think like them.	−1	3	−3	2
4.	I feel I am not a fully valued member of my community and society.	−4	−1	1	1
5.	I am prepared to make self-sacrifices for the good of all.	3	0	0	1
6.	We all have a responsibility to look after the less well-off in our community and society.	4	−3	3	−2
7.	Being a citizen means trying to have a good relationship with people you don't know.	2	3	−3	0
8.	There are certain things I feel we shouldn't do because it wouldn't be British.	−2	5	−5	0
9.	To be called a citizen of this country means nothing to me.	−4	−1	1	−4
10.	A country that cares too much for its people restricts its people.	−2	2	−2	−2
11.	I don't think we should be giving money to people who choose to live in a way that we wouldn't live.	−3	4	−4	1
12.	We need to think of ourselves as citizens of the world first and foremost.	0	0	0	0
13.	If I was in trouble and needed help, I feel someone who could help me would help me.	3	2	−2	2
14.	I am aware of the 'rules of the game' in terms of what is expected of me as a citizen of this country.	2	2	−2	3
15.	I don't feel I fully belong in our society because I am always seen as a member of a particular group.	−4	−2	2	−2

Table A1. Cont.

No.	Q-Statement	Factors			
		Factor 1	Factor 2		Factor 3
			Stance 2A	Stance 2B	
16.	Many of the problems in society cannot be solved by everyday people.	−1	0	0	3
17.	Every citizen has the chance to influence the development of their society.	2	0	0	3
18.	I believe all citizens of this country should have certain basic rights which should be guaranteed.	5	−5	5	5
19.	There are values I feel we must all agree on in order for any of us to be able to live a good life.	2	−1	1	4
20.	Everyone should get the same benefits from society no matter how much money they have.	1	−2	2	−1
21.	The UK is full of ‘opportunists’—people taking selfish advantage of circumstances.	−2	−2	2	1
22.	I think you are a citizen of this country only if you were born here.	−5	4	−4	−3
23.	People have to respect the law even if it is against what they believe is right.	1	−3	3	4
24.	I don’t feel being a citizen of this country gives me enough control over my destiny.	−3	1	−1	1
25.	Being a citizen of this country is a privilege people have to earn.	−1	3	−3	−2
26.	As long as we have winners and losers in society people will put themselves first.	−2	−4	4	−1
27.	I think it is impossible for the government to figure out what is best for most people.	0	0	0	2
28.	What people are entitled to should depend on what they do for their country.	−3	4	−4	0
29.	Any attempt to change society for the better is useful even if it doesn’t actually achieve its aim.	3	−1	1	−1
30.	I have personal needs and goals that clash with being a member of my community.	−2	1	−1	−3
31.	I think for our community’s well-being we must have a system that takes from the rich and gives to the poor.	0	0	0	−5
32.	A lot of the demands made on people like me are unfair.	−3	−1	1	−2
33.	Being a member of society is all about us discussing and deciding together how we should live.	2	−3	3	4
34.	We need to have a better balance between people’s rights in society and people’s responsibilities to society.	1	0	0	4
35.	I only feel connected to people who are similar to me in ways that are important to who I am.	−1	2	−2	−3
36.	In the end, everyone has to take care of themselves.	1	−1	1	0
37.	There are certain values that you must agree with in order to be a citizen of this country.	0	2	−2	3
38.	Only a fool would do unpaid work and that’s what voluntary work ultimately is.	−5	4	−4	−4
39.	A person’s private life should be of no concern to society.	1	−4	4	3
40.	I feel a very strong tie to this country.	2	3	−3	−1
41.	The main reason people don’t actively participate in the well-being of the community is that they simply don’t want to.	−1	0	0	−1
42.	I think the most important thing for us to have is a system that is built on developing caring relationships between citizens.	4	−3	3	−2
43.	I think it is in the interests of our community that people who need more support should be given more.	4	−4	4	2
44.	Being a citizen just means you have things like a passport, birth certificate, and/or an identity card connecting you to this country.	−2	2	−2	−4

Table A1. Cont.

No.	Q-Statement	Factors			
		Factor 1	Factor 2		Factor 3
			Stance 2A	Stance 2B	
45.	Being a British citizen means we should do certain things.	0	3	−3	1
46.	Part of being a citizen is to challenge the way society is organised.	1	1	−1	0
47.	The government cares more about helping businesses make money than about my needs as a citizen.	0	−4	4	0
48.	I think people who could do more, or give more, should take more responsibility for their community and society in general.	1	−2	2	−1
49.	When we talk about citizenship and responsibility we always seem to pick on certain groups of people.	0	−2	2	−1
50.	I am an individual and not a member of any community or society.	−3	1	−1	−3
51.	To respect others is the most important feature of being a citizen of this society.	4	−2	2	0
52.	To me, belonging to this country means you can choose the lifestyle you want without others telling you it's wrong.	3	−1	1	−3
53.	No one can tell you what being a citizen of this country is—you need to decide that for yourself.	1	−3	3	1
54.	All I expect the government to do is to make sure I can fulfil my needs and pursue my interests.	0	1	−1	−4
55.	I have certain obligations and responsibilities to society.	3	1	−1	2
56.	I think the most important thing for us is to have a system that is built on ensuring fairness and justice between citizens.	5	−5	5	2

Note: With all the participants loading negatively on factor 3, the alternative pole to that generated in the Q-sort array was interpreted. Subsequently, in the table, the sort array was inverted so what was originally a positive was made negative. The concourse from which the statements were derived was informed by the list of statements used by Bianchi and Lášticová [40].

Appendix B

Table A2. Factors matrix of young people's understandings of citizenship in Britain.

Participants Loading on the Factors				
Q-Sorts	Gender	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
38	Not given	75	−26	−14
1	Male	73	−10	−17
67	Male	71	−22	−4
57	Female	68	−14	−22
62	Female	66	−30	−1
46	Male	57	−24	−21
52	Female	53	−32	2
51	Female	53	−25	−18
68	Male	51	−19	−9
48	Female	50	0	−20
54	Male	50	0	−17
49	Male	48	−15	−24
66	Female	47	−23	−23
27	Male	44	−16	−20
3	Not given	43	−11	−24
55	Male	36	−7	17
37	Not given	35	−17	−29
53	Female	−35	31	9
60	Male	−3	56	23
31	Male	−17	52	−27
75	Male	7	41	−8
63	Female	14	−60	−33
19	Female	31	−59	−14

Table A2. Cont.

Participants Loading on the Factors				
Q-Sorts	Gender	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
40	Male	30	−51	3
39	Male	21	−49	−13
34	Male	32	−47	−12
56	Female	9	−45	0
43	Female	16	−42	−19
59	Female	23	−40	7
61	Male	−16	−38	−6
8	Male	22	−36	−12
20	Female	26	−36	−24
26	Male	11	−34	−22
64	Male	31	−3	−71
7	Male	3	−13	−61
14	Female	30	−13	−50
28	Female	7	16	−41
41	Male	22	−12	−38
15	Female	22	−15	−36
47	Female	<u>73</u>	−18	−37
10	Female	<u>66</u>	−36	−34
17	Male	<u>62</u>	−40	−16
71	Male	<u>60</u>	−46	−6
44	Female	<u>58</u>	−48	−9
73	Female	<u>57</u>	1	−41
70	Male	<u>56</u>	−37	−5
6	Female	<u>56</u>	−26	−46
23	Male	<u>55</u>	−27	−38
18	Male	<u>50</u>	−54	−14
58	Female	<u>48</u>	−27	−38
24	Female	<u>46</u>	−40	−12
9	Female	<u>44</u>	−42	−7
35	Female	<u>43</u>	−7	−53
16	Female	<u>40</u>	−30	−37
12	Not given	<u>39</u>	−20	−65
42	Male	38	−37	0
65	Male	<u>38</u>	2	−46
13	Male	<u>36</u>	8	−46
69	Male	<u>35</u>	−48	10
30	Male	16	23	−4
29	Male	14	−30	−24
50	Male	−12	−42	<u>44</u>
22	Male	−2	−4	−23
11	Male	11	−17	−17
32	Female	11	−28	−9
33	Female	−8	−45	−34
36	Not given	6	−17	−30
45	Female	2	20	−33
25	Female	6	−33	0
72	Male	24	13	−9
74	Female	28	5	−11

Note: For convenience, “0.0” has been removed from all figures in the table so that, for example, 0.075 reads 75. Loading participants used to define a factor are in bold. Participants who are underlined loaded significantly on two or more factors and were therefore not used to define a factor.

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