Doctorate in Education (EdD)

‘Patterns and dialogues in youth work practice: qualitative research into the professional identities and practices of qualified youth workers’

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June 2018

Contents

Note. A list of acronyms used in the thesis is appended at the end of the appendices.

Abstract

Key words: youth work, professional identity, youth work of value

This qualitative research study into professional youth work identities and practices offers an insider perspective on the youth work community of practice. The research inquiry adopts a socially constructivist theoretical framework and was contextualised by the political and socio-economic climate in the north-west of England in 2013. Seventeen professionally-qualified youth workers took part in focus groups and interviews that were audio-recorded and transcribed, producing data for both thematic and discursive analyses. The data seeks to shed light on personal, professional and political dimensions of youth work identities; the professional knowledge used by youth workers, evidence of the value of youth work and the discursive construction of youth work accounts.

Noticeably, the youth workers' descriptions and explanations of their practice portrayed the formative influence of biography and learning in shaping their journey into youth work. They expressed commitment to reflective practice and had passion for youth work, espousing roles as listeners, advocates and informal educators in evolving practice situations. Moreover, some innovative youth work responses to young people's needs were being recognised in some formal inter-agency contexts. Nevertheless, the data depicted youth workers conjuring up 'the blitz spirit' to deal with funding shortfalls that created feelings of being 'the poor relation' at times and finding themselves 'fighting the corner' against the onset of managerial preoccupations with targeting and outcome measures that side-lined the professional value base. The discursive lens illuminated the dialogical interaction that was positioning speakers in the discourse and constructing social and professional identities. It was evident that these were animated accounts of practice, infused with evocative imagery and capturing vibrant youth work voices that articulated the youth work point of view, an under-represented perspective in wider discourses on work with young people.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, my grateful thanks go to my thesis supervisor Dr John Howlett at Keele University for his diligent support and encouragement throughout the doctoral programme. His timely feedback on early drafts of chapters helped me to stay on track and finally complete this thesis.

I also wish to thank the departmental staff team for their programme of research seminars and workshops that proved both enjoyable and stimulating to my thinking about this research project.

In addition, I wish to thank Sarah Freestone and Natalie Hardy for their practical assistance in typing first drafts of data transcripts. Also, I appreciated the help of my friend and colleague Kathy Edmonds for proof-reading and offering her youth work perspective on this thesis.

Finally, I wish to thank the professional youth workers who took part in this research project. I enjoyed our research conversations and hope they feel that I have done justice to their passion and commitment to the youth work community of practice.

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25 April 2018

Chapter 1 Introduction

This opening chapter introduces professional youth work as a relevant area of research interest and study. It explains the structure of the thesis, outlining research parameters and its potential for new insights into youth work practice. It acknowledges the research intention to give a voice to professional youth workers amid the challenges of their everyday practice in the unsettled economic and social climate of recent years.

The purpose of the research is to explore the professional identity and practice of youth workers, through a qualitative study undertaken in 2012-2013. This project evolved from my personal and professional biography in the sector, when I undertook various practitioner roles in rural and urban youth work before becoming a youth work lecturer and researcher in the academy. After a career in the youth work sector, I continue to believe in the value of youth work but find the case is still not proven to those managing youth service funding and setting policy direction. Now, with time and opportunity, I seek to make a contribution to the ongoing debates through this substantive research project.

1.1. The structure of the thesis

The thesis is organised into eight chapters. Chapter One introduces the subject matter of the inquiry, setting out the youth work context and research intention to generate and disseminate insights on professional youth work practice. Chapter Two investigates professional and managerial discourses that are finding expression in evolving professional identities and work practices. This professional scene-setting leads into explaining the focus of the research questions. Chapter Three then examines prevalent socio-political and economic narratives that underpin the research and shape the epistemological framework. It explores its phenomenological and social constructivist attributes and acknowledges biographical influences that position the researcher within this empirical and discursive study.

Chapter Four on methodology scrutinises the research procedures and data collection methods. It looks at the rationale for using focus groups and semi-structured interviews to elicit descriptions and explanations from youth workers' discourses of practice and their 'insider' points of view. It takes account of learning from the pilot study and discusses 'research conversations', sampling and ethical considerations that steered and realigned the project through its various stages.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven (the main substantive chapters) scrutinise the research transcripts through the prisms of thematic and discourse analyses. Chapters Five and Six chart the six major thematic categories that emerged from the data, while Chapter Seven looks

more closely into the participants' use of discursive practices to construct persuasive representations of youth work. Chapter Eight debates the reliability and validity of the findings and considers their credibility alongside other sources of evidence. Finally, Chapter Nine reflects on the research aims and findings, suggesting future lines of inquiry and implications for practice.

1.2. The rationale for the study

Youth work, with its educational roots and commitment to participation and empowerment, appears to incorporate the core values that one might wish for in fostering a 'democratic' and 'just' society. For those adhering to its principles and practices, youth work may seem more meaningful and relevant in facilitating youth transitions into adulthood compared to formal educational contexts. However, if this was a generally-held belief then perhaps priority would be given to fiscal investment in universal youth work. Instead, political and managerial imperatives appear to have side-lined the occupational area of youth work and the sector has experienced severe funding cuts (House of Commons Education Select Committee (ESC), 2011a, 76 (10); Butler, 2013) leading to the diminution of generic youth services and closure of some higher education youth and community work degree programmes (Holmes, 2007; Mahadevan, 2009; Breen, 2012).

The onset of an economic recession in the United Kingdom in 2008 provided the backdrop to this changing scene. By 2010, concerns over the shrinking investment and faltering commitment to youth services and youth work education led to widespread efforts to raise the profile of youth work and the lobbying of political representatives (BBC News, 2011, 25.10.2011). The campaign of protests against service cuts became widespread over the next few years, with protesters using social media (Baron, 2011; Facebook, 2013, 5.10.2013; NUS, 2014), trade unions (TUC, 2012, 24.9.2012; Unison, 2014) and youth rallies to raise awareness of their cause. In several cases, repeated protest rallies drew attention to continuing youth service cuts, as illustrated, for example, in Birmingham (Birmingham Mail, 2011, 14.2.2011; BBC News, 2013, 2.2.2013) and Bolton (The Bolton News, 2010, 1.2.2010; In Defence of Youth Work, 2015, 4.2.2015).

I was among many youth work practitioner-researchers who wanted to contribute to the debate. In 2010, I gained institutional ethical approval for a research inquiry into youth workers' accounts of practice. Interviews with ten youth workers produced rich qualitative data suggesting persuasive narratives and professional insight into work with young people. These findings were subsequently discussed at a conference workshop held to celebrate youth and community work on Merseyside (Liverpool John Moores University, 2010). This alumni event

was attended by over forty local youth workers and led to a further exchange of professional practice.

The research data was subjected to thematic content analysis (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994) and results shared with peers at other conferences in Cambridge and Wrexham (see Pope, 2010; Pope and Jones, 2011), giving me a fruitful experience of qualitative research on which to build within the professional community of practice. The practitioners' stories were diverse and appeared to move beyond accounts of the value of youth work into the nature of professional roles and practices (Pope and Jones, 2011). This doctoral research is therefore positioned at this juncture, wanting to make a further contribution in this disputed terrain whilst tempered by the need to set realistic research goals.

Acquiring 'hard data' of the positive nature of youth work can be problematic. There is limited time available for a longitudinal study that might provide data on the impact of youth work over time. Similarly, it is difficult to weigh statistically the particular contribution that youth workers have made for they are just one of several service-providers in a neighbourhood. The difference that the youth work relationship makes may only become clear at a later date. As one youth worker put it:

> "it's about beginnings and not end products; there's still some young people I wonder about and what happened to them…fortunately or unfortunately that's just part of what we do" (Pope, 2010).

Nevertheless, youth workers themselves are available and are a first-hand source of information for this research inquiry into youth work. It is recognised that those ascribing to youth work are not a cohesive body and therefore practices may differ according to the beliefs of individual workers or the goals of their project. Thus, for some, the purpose of youth work may be recreation or education, socialisation or enfranchisement and subsequently these different views contribute to diverse practices in the sector and may also account for some of the mixed perceptions of youth work practice in the public domain. For instance, if 'the problem' is seen as young people being bored because of a lack of leisure facilities, then youth work is likely to be interpreted as effective when it offers a range of 'positive activities' that help to 'keep young people off the streets'. A different construction of 'the problem' as young people having limited power and status may lead to youth work practices to engage young people in political education that challenges existing civic practices that 'move them on' and instead, validates their use of these public spaces.

At their best, youth workers reflect on their practice to ensure they are responding to young people's developmental needs and actively engaging with their own professional development as part of a learning culture. Their concept of youth work (and the one which is used in this

study) is imbued with intrinsically organic and flexible ways of using conversations and situations as they arise to enable young people to learn and develop (Davies, 2005). The workers often describe this as 'informal education', a term that has been explained as "the wise, respectful and spontaneous process of cultivating learning. It works through conversation, and the exploration and enlargement of experience" (Jeffs and Smith, 1997, 2005, 2011). Given the amorphous nature of this construct and its responsive rather than fixed traits, it is believed that qualitative data affords the best opportunity to draw out the tacit skills and knowledge that underpin this phenomenon.

More widely, it is a research inquiry contextualised by the House of Commons Education Select Committee (ESC) hearings into 'Services for Young People' (2011a) that was a microcosm of the competing discourses in the youth and community work sector. Moreover, this research was taking place at a time when many other professional roles and activities were coming under increasing scrutiny because of institutional failures in public services, the economic imperatives of austerity and the prevalence of managerial thinking on the best way to deliver effective services. These factors were contributing to professional uncertainties across many occupations as workers found themselves caught between adhering to their customary principles and professional values, while also needing to respond to market forces and accountability narratives in their workplace. As the demand for measureable outcomes increased, there appeared to be less emphasis on professional expertise and traditional practice roles. This tension between "occupational professionalism" and "organisational professionalism" (Evetts, 2009) coalesced into some examples of "principled infidelity" as Hoyle and Wallace (2005; 2009) argue in their critique of managerialism in education. These concepts are explored further in Chapter 2 and applied later to the research findings. Overall, this study then provides the space to shed light on some of the detail of everyday practices of youth workers, going behind the mythologizing of the service and offering differing interpretations of present youth work roles and realities.

1.3. The need for research into youth work

Several voices have coalesced over calls to explain the value of youth work to others (Williamson, 2005; Taylor, 2009; Davies, 2010; Smith, 2011). Williamson (2005) in particular argues for addressing "the poor reputation of youth work" while activists from the 'In Defence of Youth Work' campaign seek a return to first principles, with *"*a radical revival of a form of Youth Work that wishes to play its part in the creation of a just, equal and democratic society" (Taylor, 2009). Noticeably, those points of view that argue not only for producing more evidence of the value of youth work but also that agitate for a 'radical revival' of youth work,

bear a resemblance to debates between organisational and occupational professionalism outlined above.

In England, jostling over subject positions in youth work discourses continued in the aftermath of civic unrest and rioting in August 2011. Among them, the Rank Foundation's seminar with youth workers and young people discussed the implications for youth work and recommended that the sector should prioritise, "being clearer about what youth work is and offers; to shape their work appropriately; and to tell people about it" (Smith, 2011). This concurred with Bernard Davies's findings outlined in his article 'Straws in the Wind' (2010), in which he cited some grassroots frustration at inadequate management support in bearing witness to the value of youth work, when, as one youth worker put it, "we should be shouting from the rooftops about what we are doing" (Davies, 2010, 27).

This clamour for research on youth work practice represents therefore a timely moment for this research study. It seeks to make a distinctive contribution to knowledge and raise the profile of the 'youth work approach' with its respect for the positive attributes of the young. Furthermore, ethical research into youth work practice has the potential for advocacy that promotes young people's well-being and positioning in society rather than using them as objects of study within a culture of surveillance (Bessant, 2009; Batsleer, 2010).

Undertaking this research may also fit in with a logical sequence of events in the trajectory of my 'career story'. Earlier research activities (Pope, 2002a; 2007) have increased my appreciation of diligent research practices that can offer a platform to those whose voices may seldom be heard. Young people and youth workers are among those who may be marginalised yet narrative research with such groups (In Defence of Youth Work, 2011; Pope and Jones, 2011) can illustrate the richness of youth workers' stories that are more than merely rendering an account of professional endeavours. Gergen (1994, 249) points out that stories are not fixed but "constructions open to continuous alteration as interaction progresses". Thus, through discussing their stories, participants may not only be making sense of their experiences but enabling the listener and reader to enter into the reality of the youth workers' and young people's worlds. The youth workers have particular skills and relationships with young people so their accounts of practice have much to offer. As such they may provide insight on the lives of the young, helping us to make sense of their needs and aspirations but also on current professional concerns in working alongside the next generation.

Among such professional concerns are the increasing demands on youth workers to produce quantitative forms of evidence – for example, measurable outcomes of service value, - yet such measures appear far removed from generating understanding of the value of the youth work relationship through which the work evolves. As an insider researcher, I believe that

qualitative methods are more in tune with capturing examples of the beneficial support and learning opportunities that youth workers can provide for young people. Moreover, such narrative accounts can also provide the space for participants to position themselves and share their experiences of professional-managerial discourses that permeate all aspects of professional life at this time.

1.4. The scope of this inquiry

In brief, this is a qualitative study that investigates the realities of social relations and practices in the youth work community of practice. It inquires into youth workers' professional knowledge and roles that contribute to their professional identity. It invites informants to share opinions and descriptions that shed light on their everyday professional practices and may contribute evidence of the value of youth work. It draws out recurring themes from their narratives and samples their use of language in their depictions of youth work practice.

This study builds on preliminary research into ten youth workers' stories of practice in 2010 (Pope and Jones, 2011) as discussed earlier. This initial inquiry informed the doctoral pilot study that took place in 2012 with five youth work practitioners from different locations. This then led into the main study in 2013 that involved seventeen research participants, who were professionally qualified youth workers from two localities in the north-west of England. The mode of the substantive research inquiry was to use two focus groups and six semi-structured interviews to generate youth workers' narratives of practice. The sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed and subjected to thematic and discursive analyses. This led to data that describes and explains professional practice, shedding light on professional identities, professional knowledge and ways in which youth workers construct accounts of their practice.

1.5. The significance of this new knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge of professional youth work, which is an under-researched service in the public domain. The timing of the research at this juncture is not only drawing attention to contemporary themes and discourses in the sector but also makes clear the debilitating effect of the economic recession on everyday youth work provision.

The findings provide descriptive detail of intricate youth work practices that illustrate 'youth work of value' and show its potential in work with other agencies. This richness of data underlines the relevance of qualitative methods for elucidating professional roles and service value, which may otherwise lie undetected by preoccupations with accruing quantitative data. Moreover, the use of a discursive lens has added value to the research, by illuminating ways in which youth workers construct accounts and make sense of their practice.

Overall, the findings have relevance for those closely involved in the sector, both in youth work training and in practice as well as those providing in-service training across the professions. In addition, by portraying the potential of professional youth work, it also has relevance to others who may be involved in funding work with young people or developing youth policy.

Chapter 2 Youth work – the professional research context

This chapter contextualizes professional youth work within historic and more recent discourses on the social professions. It considers evolving constructions of professional identity that point to individual journeys through contemporary professional discourses preoccupied with managerialism. This leads into locating professional perspectives in the youth work archives and further making clear the research focus of this project.

2.1. The professional concept and discourse

The concept of 'profession' is a broad domain. The etymological roots of the word 'profession' derive from religion where a novice would profess vows to join a religious order. Over time, as roles and activities evolved to serve society, 'the professions' became secularised and diversified into specific areas of knowledge and technical specialisation (Argyris and Schön, 1974). They were "occupations based on advanced, or complex, or esoteric, or arcane knowledge" (Macdonald, 1995, 1), which created a professional hierarchy in which the early established professions, especially religion, law and medicine, appeared to negotiate more privileged places in society. They contrasted with the institutionally-organised forms of professional services ushered in with the Welfare State and which Etizoni (1969) typified as 'semi-professions'. Later, the generic use of terms such as 'helping professions' (after Egan, 1975) or 'social professions' (Banks, 2004) appeared more suited to depicting social work, youth work and allied professions within this amorphous terrain.

According to Etzioni, the semi-professions are characterized as follows: "their training is shorter, their status is less legitimate, their right to privileged communication less established; there is less of a specialized body of knowledge, and they have less autonomy from supervision or societal control than 'the' professions" (Etzioni, 1969, v). Over the years, these demarcations have drifted, for teaching, nursing, social work and youth and community work are now all degree-entry occupations with expanding bodies of knowledge, practice traditions and codes of practice. Recently, work in these occupational areas has become diffused with the emergence of ancillary roles of (often unqualified) classroom assistants, healthcare or social care assistants, activity organisers and support workers, while at the same time there is diminishing employment of their professionally qualified counterparts in their usual roles.

Eliot Freidson (1994) defined profession as "an occupation that controls its own work, organized by a special set of institutions sustained in part by a particular ideology of expertise and service". He interpreted 'professionalism' in terms of that "ideology and special set of institutions" (Freidson, 1994, 10). Bullock and Trombley (1999) characterise professions as typified by 'formation', 'regulation' and 'autonomy' (Bullock et al., 1999, 689). Professional autonomy is a moot point here for there may be a tension between altruism and self-interest

(Parsons, 1939). Many 'new' occupations assert their professional credentials from their expert knowledge and regulated practice. It appears that if an occupational group lays claim to being professional, by acting on tacit or explicit specialised knowledge to exercise professional judgment, then it may fit in with more usual depictions of a profession. Alternatively, if an occupation is not recognised as professional in the traditional sense, then the government may act to standardise and regulate it (Sachs, 2001). Broadbent et al. (2005) argue that such moves are not just on behalf of state investment in the service but also on behalf of service users. These are evolving contested discourses where professional expertise jockeys for position with market forces and managerial narratives. Freidson (1994) posits that the professions are "intrinsically ambiguous" (Freidson, 1994, 25) and suggests phenomenological inquiry affords an appropriate way to look into this "empirical entity" (ibid).

The changing nature of professional roles in organisations is proving "compelling (and) fascinating" according to Dent and Whitehead (2002, 6). Amidst uncertainties, they predicate it may imply a "healthy" (ibid, 1) stage of development in society as it dismantles taken-for-granted outdated professional practices and exhorts us all to be more professional and accountable for what we do. However, as Robertson (2008) and others point out (see Lingard and Ozga, 2007; Menter, 2009), the current picture is one of inherent contradictions. Discourses on individual choice and stakeholder involvement in decision-making are running in parallel to increasing regulation and streamlining of services. Service delivery is constrained by "economic realities" (Apple, 2009, xiv). Indeed, Dent and Whitehead believe that managerial processes that accentuate performance and customer relations above professional knowledge have led to the blurring of professional roles and the marginalization of professional expertise and judgment.

Julia Evetts (2009) posits this situation in her contrasting constructions of professionalism. Firstly, 'Organisational Professionalism', which appears to be an imposed 'professionalism from above', infused with managerial control and expediency and secondly, 'Occupational Professionalism' or 'professionalism from within' in which workers exercise expertise and professional judgment in line with ethics in their community of practice. Beyond this though, as she points out, there are many influences at work including market forces, service commodification, public image, accountability narratives and alternative sources of 'expert' knowledge (often via the Internet). Inevitably, this produces a complex, multi-layered representation of contemporary meanings of professionalism that underpin this research project.

At this point, it is perhaps helpful to look at how these professional discourses are presenting themselves in occupations akin to youth work. In Education, for example, Menter (2009) cites

the increasing emphasis on standardisation, on performativity - that may reduce teaching to the technical delivery of the curriculum - and on accountability. He is critical of the lack of regard for “the enormous and deep commitment felt by many teachers towards their work or the personal investment involved for many teachers” (Menter, 2009, 222).

By extension, this lowly positioning of the ‘professional’ in the discourse may contribute to burnout where teachers (and other professionals such as youth workers) struggle to deliver their idealised ‘espoused theory’ (Eraut, 2002). Using Evetts’ critique as sketched above, one interpretation of the trajectory of the ‘Menter and Eraut narrative’ could imply erosion of occupational professionalism in the face of organisational professionalism. Ideologically, such a narrative might fit Robertson’s analysis of the class struggle in which she challenges neo-liberalism by “daring to talk about the worsening conditions of teachers’ work not as performativity but as exploitation” (Robertson, 2008, 15).

Uncertain times may contribute to workers’ frustration and scepticism that restorative ‘support supervision’ might only partially address. Alternatively, these feelings may evoke instances of teacher innovation or pragmatism in the face of adversity. Hoyle and Wallace (2005, 2009) describe one apt response as “‘principled infidelity’. Infidelity follows from not fully adhering to policy-makers’ expectations, and principled follows from attempting to sustain their professional values instead of embracing the alternative values under-girding reforms” (Hoyle et al., 2005, 12). This offers an alternative critique in which teachers are actively reconfiguring their professional ethics and identities to fit into evolving work contexts. Like teachers, youth workers face similar challenges to their traditional professional practices.

2.2. The emergence of the youth work profession

Youth and community work emerged through philanthropic responses to the needs of working-class young people and adults in Victorian Britain. Over time, this philanthropy created voluntary organisations that subsequently diversified in response to different ideologies, socio-economic influences and sources of funding. Significantly for the youth work sector, the government commissioned ‘The Albemarle Report’ (Ministry of Education, 1960) in the wake of the 1950s ‘baby boom’ and increasing visibility of youth culture. Its findings invigorated the sector by funding national training courses in professional youth work and sponsoring a building programme of youth clubs. Later, other reports - ‘The Fairbairn-Milson Report’ (DES, 1969) and 'The Thompson Report' (DES, 1982) – contributed to youth work’s educational, community-orientated, experiential and participative identities. Nevertheless, by the 1980s and 1990s, neoliberal ideas on managing labour and accountability were coming to the fore, triggering the production of curriculum documents, mission statements, performance indicators and outcome measures to assess the value of work across the sector.

The trend towards managerialism continued under the New Labour government (1997-2010), for although New Labour endorsed the statutory requirement that "a Local Authority has a duty to ensure the provision of a sufficient youth service" in its policy document, 'Transforming Youth Work-Resourcing Excellent Youth Services' (TYW-REYS), (DfES, 2002, 8), the focus remained on targeting services and accrediting outcomes. Youth work skills began to feature in the government's 'joined-up' approach to children and young people's services and contribute to wider interpretations of 'youth working' (Tucker, 2009) and the prevalence of 'positive activities'. The recent governmental inquiry into 'Services for Young People' (House of Commons ESC., 2011a) further illustrated some of the diversity in public and professional discourses about youth work at this time.

Moreover, recurring 'moral panics' about young people continued to permeate political and social narratives of the day (Cohen, 1973; Tucker, 2009). Young people were often portrayed negatively, with labels suggesting that they were 'problems' rather than 'assets'. The implication that they might be 'deficient' (Davies and Merton, 2009, 21) or 'at risk' (Davies, 2013, 17; Smith, 2013) sustained a youth policy investing in targeted 'one-to-one' casework and youth crime prevention rather than providing universal provision accessible to all young people. Publication of the Coalition government's youth policy 'Positive for Youth' (HM Government, 2011) with its helpful rhetoric but limited recognition of structural inequalities (Davies, 2011), compounded by reliance on the short-term 'National Citizen Service' and 'well-meaning' volunteers (Buckland, 2013) rather than commitment to resourcing the sector (Davies 2011; Buckland, 2013), did little to assuage practitioners' concerns. Increasingly, practitioners, bureaucrats and politicians were perceiving and talking about youth work differently. This study intends to explore some of these contested meanings through giving a platform to youth workers to talk about their own practice.

2.3. The professionally qualified full-time youth worker

In academic and professional circles, youth and community work is recognisably distinctive with subject benchmarks (Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), 2009) and specific routes to qualification endorsed through nationally-recognised bodies in the United Kingdom (UK) and elsewhere, where professional youth (and community) work is a recognised occupation. It is a cohesive programme of academic study and fieldwork practice that fosters professional principles and values and their application in practice. Trainee youth workers acquire knowledge of interdisciplinary approaches to 'youth' and 'community', reflective practice, experiential learning and informal education as well as develop skills in building relationships, facilitating groups, managing staff teams and delivering projects in community settings. Young

people, too, make known their expectations of youth workers in the professional endorsement documentation:

> "Youth workers need to be good: they need to know about what's important to us and what affects us; they need to know how to relate to and work with us; and they need to know how to create and provide opportunities for us to get involved in a wide range of interesting and exciting things" (NYA, 2009, 5).

Such courses are regularly reviewed and re-endorsed by the Education and Training Standards Committee of the National Youth Agency (NYA). Successful students graduate with both a degree and the nationally-recognised Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) qualification. Their duties, grades and conditions of employment are traditionally set out in the JNC report for Youth and Community Workers (known as 'The Pink Book', LGA, 2005), though recently, as noted by Mark Smith (2013) and agreed by Bradford and Cullen (2014), the employers - local authority youth services and voluntary organisations - have been drifting away from employing youth workers on JNC terms and conditions of service.

Nevertheless, it is from the recognisable JNC qualified pool of full-time youth and community practitioners rather than those generically 'youth working' in the sector that the research participants are drawn. This target group of JNC youth workers act as informants for the research, sharing in common their principles and values that lead into membership of this 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998). As such, they are "active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities" (ibid, 4).

This professional domain can be further contextualised by considering the improving standing of youth work amongst the professions according to the UK Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) index produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). In 2000, it appeared in 'Associate Professional & Technical Occupations' among 'Health and Social Welfare Associate Professionals' (323) (ONS, SOC, 2000) but by 2010, the SOC index was recognising 'professional youth (and community) work' as meriting a higher position in the occupational hierarchy, re-classifying it in 'Professional Occupations', among 'Welfare Professionals' (244) where a degree or equivalent was the entry qualification. This occupational group required "a high level of knowledge and experience" and "the practical application of an extensive body of theoretical knowledge, increasing the stock of knowledge by means of research and communicating such knowledge by teaching methods and other means" (ONS, SOC, 2010). Noticeably, the occupational tasks in this category (SOC, 2449) include "provide activities to assist young people develop and fulfil their potential as individuals and within the community", thereby setting a goal that coheres with the key purpose of youth

work expressed in the Professional and National Occupational Standards (LLUK, 2008; updated NYA, 2014a):

> "Enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential" (NYA, 2014a, 4).

In 2013, this narrative of 'holistic development' and 'potentiality' was reiterated by the Institute for Youth Work (www.iyw.org.uk) which positioned itself as offering a framework for ethical practice, a strategic voice and opportunities for continuing professional development to its members. Together, the QAA subject benchmarks (QAA, 2009), the Professional and National Occupational Standards (NYA, 2014a), the publication of 'Ethical conduct in youth work, a statement of values and principles' (NYA, 2000) and the inauguration of the Institute for Youth Work offer a coherent frame of reference for professional youth work practice.

2.4. Professional identity and the youth worker

The complexity of professional identity has been the focus of research interest in many professions (Schein, 1978; Ibarra, 1999; Beijaard et al., 2004; Baxter, 2011; Wiles, 2013). For instance, Edgar Schein, researching the occupational self-concept in the 1970s, deduced that abilities, experiences, motives and values provided a 'career anchor' to stabilize working lives. Ibarra (1999) later animated this theory with the notion of workers acquiring 'provisional' professional identities as their roles and situations evolve. Baxter's research into 'Public Sector Professional Identities' in 2011 appeared to take both these models into account. She identified culture, beliefs, language and socio-economic background as underpinning both professional and personal identities and charted other influences in an evolving professional identity as arising from biography; location in time; community, policy and public perception; ethics, power and resistance discourses (Baxter, 2011, 54). Similar examples of professional identity come from teaching and social work research studies. For example, Beijaard et al. (2004), in reviewing teachers' professional identity in a comparison of twenty-two research studies, noted themes of subject expertise, pedagogy, didactics as well as the influence of culture, biography and experience. Furthermore, a recent study by Wiles (2013) of seven social work students drew attention to professional traits, the collective sense of identity and 'individual development'.

Similar components of professional identity are apparent in the youth work tradition. For those drawn to youth work as an occupation, their motivation appears to be a combination of self-concept, that is, "the constellation of self attributes considered by the individual to be vocationally relevant" (Super, 1963, 20), and commitment to work with young people (Chivers, 1977; de St Croix, 2013), though Tony Jeffs (2006) argues against taking these traits for

granted, given the market-driven nature of the sector. Professional youth work training usually hones the skills of 'fostering association, relationship and community', 'being friendly' and recognizing the 'voluntary participation' of young people, thereby showing continuity with attributes Mark Smith (2013) has traced back through the youth work archives.

These meaningful youth work phrases and practices such as 'informal education', 'treat young people with respect', 'voluntary relationship' and 'reflective practice' have meaning as 'identity markers' (Baxter, 2011, 23) in their situated professional contexts and are also noticeable in youth work research. In one co-researched project into youth workers' discourses of practice in 2010, this author used thematic analysis to sift and discover typical youth work indicators, distilled in the typologies of 'youth work ethos' and 'youth work skills and approaches' (Pope and Jones, 2011). The first category of identity markers included 'being young person-centred' and 'learning with and from young people', while the second category was associated with 'relationship-building', 'listening', 'understanding young people', 'being flexible and responsive', 'building self-esteem' and 'breaking the cycle'. Each of these could be further indexed to discern implicit and explicit attitudes and behaviours that are associated with the youth work professional discourse. This concurs with the view of Broadbent et al. (2005, 2) that "much professional practice in all spheres is based on informal norms as well as explicit rules".

The principles and values of youth work remain rooted in building voluntary, trusting relationships with young people. However, given that the purpose of youth work is educational rather than prescriptive and intends to be responsive to young people's needs, this usually stimulates flexibility in professional roles. Youth workers often find themselves in grey areas between young people's expectations, professional roles and institutional structures. It therefore requires careful navigation and negotiation. In the words of one youth worker:

> "You walk a very fine line; sometimes you're a mentor and sometimes you're the bus driver or that ear at the end of the phone; sometimes you're the person that puts in those formal structures or supports young people to take consequences. We go along young people's journey, not they along ours, so sometimes that can be a real tricky type of tightrope that you walk" (Pope and Jones, 2011, 6).

Changes in social policy, organisational structures or social context all contribute to fluctuations in professional roles and breaking new ground in work practices as can be seen in the history of youth work with young women (Carpenter and Young, 1986) or in street-based youth work (Rogers, 1981; Wild, 1982; FDYW, 2007). Moreover, some valuable youth work practice in demanding circumstances may be under-reported as was the case with the positive

youth work interventions during the civil unrest of August 2011[1] (Smith, 2011). In other cases, inter-agency collaboration appears to lead to increasing recognition of the professional attributes of youth work, though this appears to be a mixed picture with some workers observing that "our informality (is) interpreted as unprofessional" (Davies and Merton, 2009, 44) and problems still arise from "the lack of a legal basis" (ibid). This research study affords the opportunity to explore some of these issues and to look more closely into the nuances of professional practice within the youth work discourse.

2.5. The research approach and questions

The purpose of this empirical study is to investigate the realities of social relations and practices in youth work. This substantial subject of professional inquiry is broken down into the following questions:

(1) What are the sub-identities that contribute to the professional identity of youth workers?

(2) What is the professional knowledge used by youth workers?

(3) What examples of practice provide evidence of the value of youth work?

(4) How do youth workers make sense of and construct accounts of their professional practice?

The intention is to use narrative methods to gather descriptions and explanations of professional youth work that address the research questions. Lacey (1977) and Archer (2008) in their respective studies of teachers and lecturers are among those endorsing narrative-based approaches to shed light on the nature of professionalism. Beijaard et al. stressed the relevance of narratives in illuminating teachers' practical knowledge: "this relationship between teachers' stories and their professional identity…seems to be a sound theoretical basis for researching teachers' professional identity" (Beijaard et al., 2004, 126). Similarly, Sachs (2001) advocated the importance of sharing professional accounts of practice for "these self-narratives provide a glue for a collective professional identity" (ibid, 158)

The first two research questions enable a wide-ranging exploration of professional youth work while the third question focuses in on the research participants' interpretation of 'youth work of value' in what is an increasingly contested domain. Finally, the fourth question looks into

[1] "Some of the most interesting work in the areas affected by the August 'riots' was street work There were a number of reports (and some later anecdotal evidence) of the impact of those working around the fringes of gangs, with gang members and with young people on the street. For example, youth workers in a number of areas sought out those they were working with and encouraged them away from involvement. Another feature was the number of workers involved in mediating between young people and the police during the disturbances" (Smith, 2011).

the construction of talk, by using discourse analysis and this is discussed further in chapter four.

In recent years, accountability discourses to produce evidence of 'value' have impacted severely on professional practice. New Labour's youth policy 'TYW-REYS' (DfES, 2002) steered youth work towards accreditation systems that might produce quantitative data to attest to the effectiveness of youth work (NYA, 2005; Merton et al. 2005). Nevertheless, the National Youth Agency was among those still using case studies to portray effective practice – see 'Valuing Youth Work' (NYA, 2010) – while, at the same time, beginning to develop ways to measure 'soft outcomes' (such as changes in attitude), that would fit into the accountability agenda. This impetus towards standardising evaluation systems led to the proliferation of 'capability clusters' (Outcomes Star, 2012; NYA, 2014b, 8) that helped measure 'soft outcomes' while, at the same time, youth service funding was disappearing in the wake of recession and austerity measures. The Young Foundation (www.youngfoundation.org) was among those advising the sector to be more strategic in communicating the social impact of youth work in their outcomes framework (Aylott et al., 2013), while another option was to engage with capacity-building in social finance schemes (Jones, 2013). Jones argued that this was well within the scope of youth workers for "self-management, team-working, problem-solving and communication are the bread-and-butter of the youth sector" (Jones, 2013, 8).

It is evident that youth work is a broad church with differing views on how to address current challenges. This was particularly noticeable in a counter discourse that arose from the radical roots of youth work leading to the emergence of the 'In Defence of Youth Work' (IDYW) campaign in March 2009 (www.indefenceofyouthwork.com). It offered a critical commentary on the drift towards managerialism and repositioned youth work in its more traditional habitat of voluntary and emancipatory engagement with young people. IDYW instigated events to monitor unfolding events and gather accounts to explain the value of youth work. One outcome was the publication of 'This is Youth Work: Stories from Practice' (IDYW, 2011), comprising case studies from nine youth workers and three young people to illustrate youth work in practice. The accounts offer glimpses of youth work relationships of trust that are sustained by listening, responsiveness, improvisation and staying alert to what matters to young people. Moreover, it used a narrative methodology to elicit material on 'professional knowledge used by youth workers' and 'examples of youth work of value', that are also relevant to my research project as well as exemplifying a suitable respectful approach to adopt with research participants.

Cullen et al. (2012) argue that more practitioner-research could shed light on youth work processes and increase understanding of young lives. However, producing more accounts of

practice may not resolve resourcing concerns and reaffirm professional autonomy. As Bronwyn Davies (2003) pointed out, in work contexts, practitioner-research may become aligned with narratives of 'accountability' to produce evidence of 'best practice'. It may lead to decisions based on such evidence because it is esteemed more highly than professional expertise (Hammersley, 2001). Should the sector be generating evidence-based practice or maybe evidence-informed practice? Hammersley suggests that evidence seeks to objectify professional practice and such findings that are amorphised into generalised statements should be treated with caution. In fact, as Kristin Smith (2007) suggests, it may be that 'best practice' has 'gone underground' and might be uncovered by paying more attention to resistance strategies that elucidate the complexity of everyday practice. These cautionary thoughts are taken into account in my interview question on 'third space identities' that is discussed in chapter four (see 4.4).

For youth workers, their 'tacit professional knowledge' is self-evident and beyond what may appear on the surface as organising diversionary 'positive activities' to occupy young people. This research project can help by addressing a perceived weak link in the chain, and contribute to making this 'tacit professional knowledge' more explicit and developing what Jean Spence (2008) has called, 'the language of youth work practice'. It was an approach ably demonstrated by Spence and Devanney in their own research into everyday youth work practice (Spence et al., 2006), Subsequently, Spence urged youth workers to take steps to position youth work more favourably in professional and policy contexts by explaining the 'informal education' attributes of youth work; clarifying youth work in relation to other disciplines and also, portraying "the affective, emotional and interpersonal aspects of the work" (Spence, 2008, 16) in the professional discourses. This study intends to contribute to this endeavour.

Chapter Three The contemporary research context

Having established the professional research context, this chapter considers contemporary socio-political narratives that permeate this research project. The study was undertaken midway through the five year term of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government of 2010-2015, when Coalition policies on 'The Economy' and the 'Big Society' were reshaping the delivery of public services. Narratives of accountability were being reproduced in politics and the professions in response to public concern over institutional failures. This overview of the political, economic and social domains contextualises the project and thus informs both the epistemology and methodology. It thereby 'sets the scene' to discuss the position of the researcher in relation to the research project.

3.1. The advent of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government

Economic discourses have dominated British politics in recent years. The banking crisis of 2008 caused the UK economy to falter, unemployment to rise and the onset of economic recession (House of Commons Library, 2010). Debates over the best way to handle the economic crisis dominated the UK General Election of 2010 and produced a hung parliament. It was a political impasse that was resolved by formation of a Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government "to work in the national interest" (HM Government Coalition, 2010) for a five-year term of office.

The Coalition agreed that "deficit reduction, and continuing to ensure economic recovery, is the most urgent issue facing Britain" (ibid, 15) and thereby established an economic imperative that was to infuse government policies, triggering austerity measures and significant cuts to funding of public services. By 2012, with continuing economic uncertainty, the Office for National Statistics reported a return to recession (ONS, 2012a), with high levels of unemployment, especially among 16 to 24 year-olds (ONS, 2012b). It is amid this unsettled economic climate that this research study takes place.

3.2. 'The Big Society'

In the General Election of 2010, the Conservative party had campaigned on the premise of 'Change Society, Build the Big Society' (Conservative Party Manifesto, 2010) and this policy agenda of the 'Big Society' reappeared in the Conservative-led Coalition Agreement (HM Government Coalition, 2010). The idea of the 'Big Society' is relevant to the area of research interest, for it appeared to espouse different ways of providing services in the community. Opinion around the 'Big Society' varied, its supporters explaining the policy will "give new powers and rights to neighbourhood groups: the 'little platoons' of civil society – and the institutional building-blocks of the Big Society" (ibid, 38) while its opponents suggested it may

be idealistic or impractical; refocusing on localism or acting as a cover for cuts (Barnard, 2010, 5-8). As such, “the Big Society has to be seen as an untested social experiment that requires to be evaluated objectively and independently using a broad range of social and economic indicators” (ibid, 3).

As the Coalition government reduced public sector funding, they were promoting reliance on the ‘Third Sector’ of charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprise. This policy of “opening up public services, encouraging social action and giving more power to local communities” (Cabinet Office, 2010) that was encapsulated in ‘The Office for Civil Society’, implied a diminution of public sector professional roles in local communities. Along with the commissioning of services, it reflected the increasing impact of market forces that were being brought to bear on existing publicly-funded youth and community provision.

Further to this policy, the Coalition Agreement proposed creating more ‘mutuals’ (organisations run for the benefit of their members) and expanding social enterprise; promoting volunteering and community service; and setting up a National Citizen Service (NCS) for 16 year olds (HM Government Coalition, 2010, 29-30): -

> “We will introduce National Citizen Service. The initial flagship project will provide a programme for 16 year olds to give them a chance to develop the skills needed to be active and responsible citizens, mix with people from different backgrounds, and start getting involved in their communities” (HM Government Coalition, 2010, 29).

These statements of intent under the Coalition government signalled a significant break with the New Labour administration through this reconfiguring of youth policy and disruption to funding of public services.

3.3. Impact of economic policies on public funding of youth service provision

Youth services, with their weaker statutory base than other public services, were an easy target for funding cuts. Patrick Butler (2013) writing in ‘The Guardian’ reported that,

> “Youth services have borne the brunt of the hefty spending cuts visited upon local authority children's services budgets. Between 2010 and 2012, cuts to youth services averaged 27%. In 19 English councils, the reductions amounted to more than 50%. A handful of authorities axed their entire youth budget” (Butler, 30.4.2013).

In the early days of the Coalition government, the public outcry following significant cuts to young people’s services triggered the convening of Education Select Committee hearings on ‘Services for Young People’ in 2011. The witnesses included youth workers, who reported young people’s views on what was happening to youth provision and argued that “young

people…like the idea of NCS. They are concerned, however, that their own youth services are being cut in their areas" (House of Commons ESC, 2011b, Q16, witness LP).

Moreover, official responses to young people's protests over funding cuts appeared evasive and to fudge the issue:

> "One thing we find is that when young people speak against cuts in their services, local government is saying, 'It's not us. It is at national level that we are being told to make cuts.' Then when young people are talking nationally, they are told that 'the decisions are made at local government level'. They are finding that they are up against a brick wall" (ibid, Q46, witness LP).

In its final report, the Education Select Committee concurred that there was severe hardship across the youth sector and pointed to the delay in the Coalition government setting out its own youth policy:

> "We acknowledge that there have already been very significant, disproportionate cuts to local authority youth services—a situation which the Minister acknowledged—ranging from 20% to 100%. In this context we comment that the Government's lack of urgency in articulating a youth policy or strategic vision is regrettable" (House of Commons ESC, 2011a, 3).

The Coalition government's preliminary response to the Education Select Committee's Report was followed later by its own 'Positive for Youth' policy (HM Government, 2011; 2013a), which reiterated narratives of economic necessity to justify reduced public funding and underlined Conservative manifesto ideas of 'localism' and the 'Big Society' as ways to deliver services for young people. Inevitably, given the topicality of these political and economic policies and their impact on everyday youth work practice, they re-emerge in the research data of my study in 2012-2013.

Furthermore, the Joseph Rowntree Report 'Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion' (MacInnes et al., 2014) identified a worrying increase in poverty in working-age adults. Some of this economic hardship became more visible through the increased take-up of food banks. One viewpoint interpreted this as an example of the 'Big Society' at work (Nelson, 2015) whilst others expressed shock at the prevalence of food banks (Welby, 2014) and suggested it was symptomatic of 'the relentless rise of food poverty in Britain' (Cooper et al., 2014). The pervasiveness of zero hours' contracts is similarly subjugated to differing interpretations according to political allegiance.

3.4. The undermining of public confidence in British institutions

Since 2008, several instances of poor practice and criminal behaviour in major British institutions have come into the public domain. In 2008, the parlous state of the banking sector that required an injection of public capital to survive was followed within the year by the scandal of the misuse of MPs' allowances and expenses. To some observers, questions of trust in politicians continued into the Coalition era when the Liberal Democrats reneged on their manifesto pledge to oppose increases in student tuition fees (BBC News, 2012, 20.9.2012). Meanwhile, the report of the Hillsborough Independent Panel proved that the Police had been "systematically dishonest" (Johnston, 2012) in their cover up of events around the football tragedy of April 1989. The Prime Minister David Cameron gave an official apology to the families of the bereaved in recognition of the "double injustice" of police failures and attribution of blame for the disaster to fans (House of Commons Hansard, 2012a).

There were other examples of institutional failure at the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and in the National Health Service. In 2012, claims of widespread instances of historical sexual abuse were publicized, triggering the Metropolitan Police investigation known as 'Operation Yewtree' (House of Commons Hansard, 2012b). The recently deceased Jimmy Savile was among those named as a prolific offender, who used his celebrity status as a BBC television presenter and charity fund-raiser to access and molest vulnerable children, young people and adults in children's homes and hospitals. Previously, bureaucratic interventions by those in power had set aside the stories of those most affected and impeded the prosecution of the offenders. Public alarm over these systemic failures, coupled with growing evidence of organized child grooming and sexual abuse in many places including Rochdale, Oxford and Rotherham, gave political impetus to establish a wider Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (May, 2014).

The tendency to blame the professions in general for specific failures meant that some high quality professional practice was over-shadowed and young people's accounts not believed. For instance, in Rotherham, an innovative youth project, 'Risky Business', successfully used outreach work with young women to address child prostitution issues over several years but their evidence was discounted by inflexible safeguarding models adopted by Social Services and Police (Casey, 2015). The early silencing of those most significantly involved in these experiences appeared to be a recurring theme.

Increasingly, media accounts portrayed professional services in a negative light. This was particularly apparent in media reporting of the failures in the care for Victoria Climbié and Baby P (The Telegraph, 2010, 26.2.2010), and contributed to public waning of confidence in professional roles. In due course, the Press itself came under scrutiny through the public

hearings of the Leveson Inquiry of 2011-2012 that followed News International's infamous use of phone hacking to pry into private lives (DCMS, 2012). Overall, these events depicted unsettling times as different agencies came in and out of the spotlight, to justify their actions or express regret, followed by promises to put new safeguards in place to protect members of the public. It was also a pertinent reminder that opinions on issues may vary as circumstances change. As Michael Billig (1991) points out, the discursive landscape of rhetoric and argument "entails accepting that the time and place in which people live affect the nature of their thinking" (Billig, 1991, 1). This fits within the realms of postmodern uncertainties where shifting representations of reality are the source of knowledge and voices on the periphery need to be heeded as well as those occupying the centre ground. It further confirms the research intention to ensure that the views and experiences of these research participants are respected and valued for the light they shed on their own working lives and the young people with whom they work.

3.5 Implications for the research theory of knowledge

> "Research projects are situated of course within the parameters and debates of the particular social science discipline and by the epistemologies and theories that ground the empirical work" (Riessman, 2008, 185).

This is a qualitative research project that is rooted in phenomenological and social constructionist theories of knowledge. It deploys a phenomenological stance, which Freidson (1986) has described as suitable to study 'the professions', and relies on the interpretative narratives of the participating youth workers to explore the social phenomenon of youth work. Given the emergence of differing phenomenological traditions (see Cohen and Omery, 1994; Crotty, 1998, among others), this study is aligned with the view that "phenomenology arises from the reflective analysis of the meaning of the lived world of experience" (Ray, 1994, 123). Appropriately then, it pays attention to the participants' first-hand accounts of everyday youth work realities, their social contexts and the meanings accrued at this point in time. It is positioned to investigate the phenomenon afresh, starting from detailed descriptions that shed light on the essence of youth work practice and thereby contribute to forms of epistemology. The research also sits within the social constructionist model of research that uses interviews and focus groups to co-construct nuanced accounts of professional experiences. These accounts draw on culturally-embedded use of language and the wider discursive landscape.

Qualitative research offers, furthermore, the means to capture 'soft' data that may depict some of the emotions and practices associated with youth work. One such example appeared in de St Croix's small study of front-line youth workers, "'I just love youth work!' Emotional labour, passion and resistance" (de St Croix, 2013) in which she described the participants' "authentic

love of youth work" that may enable workers to resist "systems which treat people as commodities" (ibid, 48). Similarly, my research inquiry expected to elicit qualitative data to expose "a 'deeper' understanding of (the) social phenomena" (Silverman, 2000, 8) than would otherwise be available. Moreover, such data will have 'emic' qualities in seeking "to describe culture based on subjects' own concepts and descriptions" (Silverman, 2011, 468). Overall, its post-positivist subjective nature intends to apprehend some of the elusive qualities of youth work and ascertain the epistemological fit with existing knowledge and the critical community of practice (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

3.6. The centrality of narrative methods

Narrative methods are pivotal to this research project and are deployed in three different ways. Among them are firstly, the stories of experiences related by the research participants; secondly, the narratives constructed and interpreted by the researcher in writing up the research and thirdly, the narrative meaning-making of the whole project by the reader (Riessman, 2008).

The present analysis of narrative construction is informed by the work of Labov (1972) and Gergen (1998, 2009). Labov (1972) believed interviews afforded a suitable platform for research participants to relate meaningful biographical experiences in an orderly manner. Typically, he found that well-formed narratives usually incorporated six elements: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result or resolution and coda. The abstract with its brief overview of the story led into some scene-setting to orientate the listener to characters in the narration. The complicating action provided the plot that stimulated audience interest and led on to the speaker's reflection on the value of this story. Next, the story would provide the denouement to resolve the issue raised in the plot and then, finally, there would emerge a closing sequence or coda that rounded off the story line.

Labov's work is valued for its contribution to the scientific analysis of narratives and his empirical studies of social-linguistic speech patterns in particular communities. Others later criticised Labov for his reliance on interpreting linguistic variation in terms of social stratification and socio-economics rather than recognising that language use varies according to meaning-making in the social interaction (Eckert, 2012). Today's socio-linguistic analysts are interested in studying the 'correlation' between linguistic forms and social organisation (Kress, 2001, 33) that can bring to light the 'code-switching' of speakers (Gumperz, 1982) and the nuance of grammatical choices and para-linguistics that communicate meaning.

In this study, a narrative-discursive approach is used to study the social construction of narratives, in which research participants are social actors who "story their experience" (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). These speakers are not "passive and stable carriers of dialect, but (are)

stylistic agents, tailoring linguistic styles in ongoing and lifelong projects of self-construction and differentiation" (Eckert, 2012, 97-98). Similarly here, the youth workers utilise many rhetorical devices in constructing accounts of 'being professional youth workers' at this time.

Typically, Gergen (1998, 2009) argues, these narratives have five characteristics: "Establishing a valued endpoint"; "Selecting events relevant to the endpoint"; the sequential "Ordering of events"; "Stability of identity" of main characters in the story and "Causal linkages" that explain and contribute to conventions of the "well-formed narrative" within western traditions of story-telling (Gergen 2009, 37-38).

The stories offer a socially-constructed view of reality, a philosophical position that asserts "truth is constructed by social processes, is historically and culturally specific, and is part-shaped through the power struggles in a community" (Epstein, 2012, 20). Consequently, these accounts may only be 'partial truths' (Clifford, 1986) of present social realities but, nevertheless, are meaningful to the participants. Such stories are expected to be fluid, being shaped by the interaction and moreover, "help people find common ground with others and thereby engage in a process of mutual social support that is empowering" (Thorsheim and Roberts, 1995, 204). As such, it can be a positive experience, as reported by one participating youth worker in the preliminary study of 2010: "really useful – always good to reflect on practices as we don't often get to do that in day-to-day life" (Pope, 2010). Thus, the research has the potential to lead to socially desirable outcomes: it may not only affirm the informants' experiences but also serve to increase understanding of the nature of youth work.

Table 1 below, sets out the relationship between the research questions, epistemology, methodology and forms of data analysis:

Table 1: Overview of Research Study

Research feature				
Subject of research	Youth workers' identity & sub-identities	Youth workers' professional knowledge	Examples of youth work of value	Youth workers' construction of talk
Theory of knowledge	Social Constructivism and Social Phenomenology			
Data collection methods	Focus groups & Individual interviews			
Data analysis	Thematic & discourse analyses	Thematic & discourse analyses	Thematic & discourse analyses	Discourse analysis

3.7 Influence of researcher's perspective

The research task is complex not least because of my personal and professional investment in the process. The research is infused with meanings derived from my knowledge and experiences as a youth work practitioner, educator and researcher. Undertaking this social research project achieves several ends. As a mature research student, it affords the time and opportunity to take a longer view of subject matter that is of continuing professional interest. It draws on existing research and study skills to satisfy this professional curiosity and achieve a recognised academic outcome. A strong personal motivation to achieve a positive 'academic outcome' is tempered by belief in the need for credible research procedures, informed by British Educational Research Association Research Guidelines (BERA, 2011) and responsive to professional ethics and youth work values (see Banks, 2004). In his reflections on 'Ethics in Research', Ian Gregory (2003) advises researchers to be clear on the moral disposition of principles, positions and traits that they bring to their research. In my case, this "individual moral outlook" (Gregory, 2003, 67) is informed by not only by belief in anti-oppressive practice, derived from formative personal and professional work experiences, but also from teaching and research on 'person-centred' listening (Pope, 2002b; 2002c), all of which arguably imply this is a serious and credible research project that is ethically-informed with an appropriate skill-set.

The research activity warranted mature reflection and critical detachment on my part given my ontological predisposition of a belief in the value of youth work. It implied committing to a reflective and reflexive stance in undertaking qualitative research into everyday youth work experiences and avoiding infusing the findings with "assumptions which concern the very nature or essence of the social phenomena being investigated" (Cohen et al., 2011, 5). The researcher's belief that youth work is of value does not assume that all activities with young people constitute 'youth work' or, for that matter, sit within the professional value base (see Banks, 2010). Gergen further urges "a celebration of 'critical reflexivity', that is, the attempt to place one's premises into question, to suspend the 'obvious', to listen to alternative framings of reality, and to grapple with the comparative outcomes of multiple standpoints" (Gergen, 2009, 12).

The research aimed to produce knowledge that might contribute to topical debates about youth work practices and contexts. Moreover, I was curious to find out how the present-day youth worker was faring amid the challenges of economic austerity, the dismantling of many local authority youth services and shrinking budgets. It appeared to be a deteriorating situation that others, such as Carlene Firmin, similarly recognised:

> "A lack of youth services is failing children and young people in the UK. A new government report on child poverty stresses the need to increase opportunities outside of the home, yet youth services are nowhere to be found" (Firmin, 2013, 22.10.2013).

These vulnerabilities in the sector underlined the need for sensitivity in approaching suitable informants to find out 'how things are' in today's youth work practice settings. The study provided the opportunity to understand current practice from different perspectives and differentiate it from my own career pathway.

The most prominent voices were intentionally those of the participating youth workers, though it was understood that my own part in co-constructing and interpreting accounts would have a bearing on the findings. It is noticeable that young people do not have a direct say in this thesis. This is not to doubt or deny the importance of their stake in their own affairs nor their ability to articulate those views. Instead it is a pragmatic decision in light of my interest in giving a platform to professional youth workers who work at the grass roots level, that is, directly in face-to-face work with young people. Youth workers are knowledgeable about young people's lives and what works in practice, yet these workers struggle to be heard in competing discourses over youth policy and practice. This thesis seeks to place the youth workers centre stage to hear what it is they have to say about youth work and analyse the data in ways that will percolate into other educational arenas. Applying more than one form of analysis offers different ways to understand and interpret what is being said.

The first-hand accounts of youth work practice will create a world that I recognise, notwithstanding that it may be multi-layered or differentiated by the times in which we live. The empirical data of present-day youth work realities generates various perspectives that require researcher neutrality and analytical rigour in order to have credibility within the 'imagined' (Seale, 1999) or critical research community. One such relevant community of practice in which to deliberate on this research study is the Training Agencies Group (TAG) of The Professional Association for Lecturers in Youth and Community Work (www.tagpalycw.org) that operates across the four devolved administrations of the United Kingdom. The TAG Association provides a suitable forum to discuss youth work policy, practice and research. It is a research-active network of academic peers whose focus is 'to promote research, education and training in youth and community work in higher education for the public benefit' (TAG, Objects of the Association).

The TAG annual conference of 2012 provided a timely opportunity to discuss findings from the early formative studies to this project, through my presentation on 'Analysing practitioners' stories: analysis of two pilot studies into the value of youth work' (Pope, 2012; see also conference abstract in appendix 1). This early move to discuss work in progress and

disseminate initial research findings served as a form of “peer debriefing” that Guba argues, is appropriate “to provide inquirers the opportunity to test their growing insights and to expose themselves to searching questions” (Guba, 1981, 85). By exposing my thinking at this stage to this “jury of peers” (ibid) Guba suggests it may contribute to later claims for data credibility and trustworthiness. The experience also afforded a “reality check” (Bessant and Farthing, 2012, 199) on the project to date.

The ensuing professional conversations with colleagues enabled me to reflect further on where I was positioning my research project in relation to other recent influential studies in the sector. Among these might be counted ‘Youth work: voices of practice’ (Spence et al., 2006) and Bernard Davies’s editing of ‘This is youth work: stories from practice’ (IDYW, 2011), both briefly mentioned earlier in Chapter Two. Ways in which this substantive research study is both different from these works and making a positive contribution to the debate are discussed further in Chapter Eight (see 8.5). It was evident that paying careful attention to the “intentions, processes and consequences of the research project” (Bessant and Farthing, 2012, 188) would be crucial in determining what counted as good research. The next chapter looks in detail at the research methodology and procedures that produced the findings.

Chapter 4 Methodology

In this chapter, attention turns to looking into the choice of strategies to collect 'insider' data to address research questions. This discussion is informed by literature on research methods and reflections on learning from the unfolding research experience. The first section sets the scene with descriptions of the research role at different phases of the project. This leads into a closer look at the pilot study that not only suggested the potential of the subject-matter but also indicated areas to develop for robust research practice. The next section looks briefly into the value of focus groups for qualitative inquiries as a prelude to an in-depth explanation of how this procedure was used. This is followed by a similar exposition of semi-structured interviews, with both approaches involving audio-recording the conversations to produce transcripts of data for analysis. Consideration is then given to the composition of the sample before the focus turns to studying the case for thematic and discursive analyses of the data. Finally, the chapter closes with some reflections on ethical dimensions of the research design.

4.1. Role of the researcher

My research position was that of the 'professionally-informed' researcher for it drew on my professional youth work knowledge and experience in the academy and fieldwork settings. These attributes enabled me to develop the research inquiry as an 'insider' and member of the youth work community of practice. Blaikie (2009) has described the value of 'insider' research as a means to:

> "Discover why people do what they do by uncovering the largely tacit, mutual knowledge, the symbolic meanings, intentions and rules, which provide the orientations for their actions. Mutual knowledge is background knowledge that is largely unarticulated but which is constantly used and modified by social actors as they interact with each other" (Blaikie, 2009, 89).

The potential of insider research, as depicted by Blaikie, fits in with the aims of this enquiry. It contributes to practitioner research in the youth work sector, which is not new (see, for example, Chivers, 1977; Smith, 1985), but is increasingly promoted in youth work training and the professional literature (Spence and Wood, 2011; Bradford and Cullen, 2012). Youth work practitioners are well aware of this focus on the policy-research-practice trichotomy and the need for a proactive stance on research activities. Their position and mine combined favourably to ease my access to suitable professional organisations and research informants. The early stages of the research were characterised by exploratory 'research conversations' with professional peers, thereby emulating the work of Baxter (2011) who took similar steps

to establish her inquiry into 'public sector professional identities'. These collaborative conversations fine-tuned this research project.

A summary of the main phases of the research appears in table 2:

Table 2: Summary of Research Schedule	
Date	**Activity**
Spring 2012	Pilot study
Autumn 2012	Development of substantive research proposal
Winter 2013	University Research Ethical Review Panel approval
Spring 2013	Initial agency contact with intermediaries and research participants. Facilitate two focus groups
Summer 2013	Conduct six semi-structured Interviews
2014 - 2017	Data analysis and writing up thesis

To implement the pilot stage of this inquiry, I drew on the topical reference point of the parliamentary hearings into 'Services for Young People' (House of Commons ESC, 2011a). I identified three of its themes to investigate further: 'the impact of funding cuts on provision'; 'the roles of youth workers' and the debate on 'how to determine the value of services'. These generated lines of inquiry for the pilot focus group of 2012. Some of the pilot learning is reviewed in the next section (4.2) while the approach to thematic analysis is discussed later (4.6).

The next stage was to formulate a research proposal for 'A qualitative study into youth workers' discourses of professional practice', in autumn 2012. This received ethical approval from the University Research Ethical Review Panel in January 2013 (see appendix 2). The proposal was supported by supplementary documentation including the 'Agency Invitation Letter', 'Youth Worker Invitation Letter', provision of an 'Information Sheet' (appendices 3-5) and Participant Consent Form.

The research design involved using focus groups and semi-structured interviews, which are recognised as suitable qualitative methods of data collection (Silverman, 2011; Seale, 2012). These methods provide conversational contexts to produce both descriptive accounts of the youth worker's world and material for narrative analysis. Moreover, group work and one-to-one work complement generic youth work practice, and, with their traits of interaction and reflection, are conducive towards an insider point of view. The concept of reflective practice infuses professional training and development across the disciplines. Youth workers are among those who practise 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' (Schön, 1987) in order to learn from their experiences and develop their practice. This quality of reflection was a recognisable attribute used by both research participants and the researcher in facilitating the research process. This pointed to a duality in the roles of youth worker and researcher that

was noted by Spence and Devanney (2006) who recognised that “making sense of the different types of communication recorded in the research is similar to the interpretive process of sense-making undertaken by youth workers in their everyday practice” (Spence et al., 2006, 46).

The substantive research took place in two districts within one region of Northwest England. For the purposes of anonymity, and for ease of distinguishing between the districts in the text (as may be necessary), district one is renamed ‘Highbury’ and is a mixed rural and urban locality; district two is renamed ‘Thornville’ and is an industrial conurbation. These were conveniently located research sites that offered a practical and economical way of implementing the research plan. Moreover, they were appropriate because they had a suitable mix of statutory and voluntary grass roots youth workers who would enable me to address the research questions.

At an early stage, attention was given to considering the best way to approach suitable research informants. In my preliminary study of 2010 and pilot study of 2012, I had used purposive sampling to approach the majority of research participants[2] to invite their participation. Several of them had been former students from youth and community work courses where I tutored. They had willingly consented to speak about their practice and answer research questions. Now, in order to create more critical distance from the potentially distorting effects of former students rendering accounts of their career trajectory to an erstwhile tutor, I made approaches to the pool of suitable candidates through well-placed professionally-qualified intermediaries in the region.

I emailed four intermediary agency contacts, who were able to facilitate access to qualified youth workers. The initial email to the intermediaries was followed by a phone call to explain the purpose of the research and backed up by emailing a copy of the research information sheet. These intermediaries were active in the youth work sector: two were local authority youth service managers (services A and B), the third was a voluntary sector manager (agency C) and the fourth was a youth and community lecturer working in a neighbouring university (university D) and part of the Training Agencies Group network. This fourth contact enabled me to reach out to some of their suitably-qualified graduates working within the same Northwest region to invite expressions of interest in contributing to the research.

With the agreement of the intermediaries, I was able to circulate information to their network of youth workers with invitations to take part. Several youth workers expressed interest, were sent further information and recruited to the project. These research participants were youth

[2] The exceptions were the five Australian respondents recruited by a ‘snowballing’ strategy in the preliminary study of 2010, see Pope and Jones, 2011.

workers holding the professional JNC youth and community work qualification and who were undertaking at least some work directly with young people. These pre-requisites of 'JNC' and 'face-to-face' practice were selected in order to standardise the research population towards the professional norms and practices of front-line youth work. Nevertheless, there would be local differences as workers' roles varied according to service priorities and needs in particular neighbourhoods. Overall, the combination of participants from both typical and diverse settings optimised the potential to gather rich data.

I used email and phone calls to arrange for these youth workers to join their locally-convened focus group in either Highbury or Thornville. A few were subsequently unable to attend their focus group because of variations in their work schedules or personal circumstances. However, sufficient numbers of youth workers were available to proceed with the focus groups on the planned dates. The procedures adopted in facilitating and audio-recording the focus groups and interviews are discussed in sections 4.3 and 4.4 respectively. This is followed by a detailed analysis of the sample (4.5), an explanation of the steps taken to produce the transcripts and analyse the data (4.6), culminating in ethical reflections on the research design (4.7).

Each stage of the project created an opportunity to take stock before proceeding. An example of this arose as I listened to the audio-recordings of the focus groups in preparation for moving on to the interview stage. I realised that more up-to-date knowledge of present day concerns of the three main agencies could help me contextualise the focus group discussions. This led me to arrange to meet my three professional intermediaries (A, B and C) for a separate one-off interview in the summer of 2013. These discussions were audio-recorded by agreement and served to provide useful background detail of changes to their funding and organisational restructuring. I listened to their examples of agency good practice that were sustained despite the changing circumstances. These meetings did not refer to any of their staff members participating in the research. Nor did it include any disclosure of information acquired through the focus groups and interviews. Instead, the occasion served as an opportunity to hear and acknowledge their first-hand professional experience and was beneficial in completing the loop between the beginning and end of my research relationship with them.

4.2. The pilot study

The pilot study was carried out in 2012 in advance of the main study in 2013. It involved recruiting five experienced youth work practitioners whom I knew but did not tutor in my academic role. The study was ethically approved and participants gave informed consent before three of them joined in a small focus group and two others engaged in semi-structured

interviews. The sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed. The prompts for the discussion appear in table 3.

Table 3: Pilot Study Focus Group and Interview Prompts	
1	What youth work means to you - the reasons why you're a youth worker
2	What are some of the realities of your everyday youth work practice?
3	What has been the impact of youth work policy on your practice? Have things changed?
4	Any examples of your youth work practice that has made a significant difference to others

Following the pilot, these questions were augmented to draw out more descriptions and explanations of youth work practice in readiness for the substantive study (see appendix 6). I enjoyed the pilot experience and found it beneficial in meeting some of the attributes identified by both Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) and Thabane et al. (2010) in their critique of the value of pilot studies within the research domain. Thus, it provided knowledge of the feasibility of the project, enabling some refinements to the research design and practising of research skills. It was a formative endeavour that could contribute to building trust and credibility in research procedures, as advocated by Yin (2011).

In reflecting on the pilot, I identified specific points of learning. The audio recordings were particularly valuable, for they provided insight into my facilitation techniques, increased my appreciation of the time required to produce suitable transcripts and led to experimentation with preliminary data through 'conversation analysis' (Sacks, 1992) and 'discursive formations of power-knowledge' (Foucault, 1972). In addition I became aware, that I needed to distinguish between preliminary and later data sets to avoid 'contamination' (Van Teijlingen et al. 2001) of the evidence. The pilot data was percolated with details that showed the severe impact of austerity measures on usual youth work practices. Yin (2011) points out, that caution is needed in placing over-reliance on early findings due to the passage of time between gathering, analysing and presenting data. However, it was difficult to be impassive when this data fitted in with my understanding of the general situation and was further endorsement of evidence taken in the 'Services for Young People' parliamentary hearings. It contributed to an expectation that more examples would appear in later data and that the impact of austerity needed to be carefully tabulated as one theme among the findings. I recognised too that applying conversation analysis was illuminating of the social constructionist nature of these findings. I looked with interest towards the next stage of the fieldwork which was to involve data collection through the focus groups.

4.3 The focus groups

Focus groups are a recognised popular method of exploring an issue with a group of people (Kitzinger, 1994, 1995; Wilkinson, 2006; Krueger and Casey, 2008). They usually involve a facilitated discussion on a topic in which answers to questions are not only of interest to researchers but also the group dynamics that construct these conversations (Puchta and Potter, 2004; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). As they interact, focus group members generate data, which has a value but as Tonkiss (2012) cautions, may not always be typical of the sector nor 'naturally occurring' events. Nevertheless, such group conversations can produce meaningful constructs of professional practice that give rise to qualitative data. Furthermore, the informal social interaction and dialogue generate material on social-cultural contexts and discursive processes worthy of further analysis. Thus, audio-recording and transcribing the discussion enables closer scrutiny of both the subject matter and also the construction of talk.

Puchta and Potter (2004) point to the business of the focus group in which "opinions, views, attitudes and beliefs" (ibid, 19) are produced. They argue that these opinions are "performed" rather than "pre-formed" (ibid, 22) and identities are forged through these 'performances'. The subsequent group dynamics may elicit participants' attitudes and opinions but also inhibit some participants according to Kitzinger (1995). Thus, due care and attention was needed in the preparation, facilitation and debriefing of group activity. My intention was to listen and learn about their youth work experiences and facilitate their sharing of practice.

I was the organiser and moderator of two focus groups, convening one in each district. Youth workers are familiar with group work for it is integral to youth work training and fieldwork practice. This understanding eased their entry into taking part in a group discussion on their experiences. A suitable meeting time was negotiated by email and directions given to the venue. These venues were locally available and accessible meeting places that had been negotiated through the support of the professional intermediaries. The focus group had exclusive use of the room for its discussion and was able to meet without interruption. Participants were greeted on their arrival and hospitality provided to help them relax and feel welcome. Each participant already knew at least one other group member and this helped the settling in process. At this stage, participants completed a form with basic demographic information (see section 4.5 with sample details); they gave their informed consent to take part in the research and agreed to the use of quotations from the data for the purposes of this study.

The furniture in the room was arranged in an inclusive manner with chairs placed in a circle so that participants could see and hear each other. As moderator, my opening remarks to the participants included the practicalities over using this venue and agreeing a mutually-suitable

finishing time. I explained my role in this research project and interest in hearing their views. I drew attention to the 'digital voice recorder' that was being used to record the session so that I could later transcribe the discussion to produce data for analysis. The recorder was placed clearly in view on the table and, as a precautionary measure, had been tested before the session began. Matters of confidentiality were discussed to reassure participants that data would be anonymised and any shared confidences were to be respected and stay within this group.

The moderating role involved facilitating group interaction using prepared focus group prompts as a guide. These five topic areas were circulated in advance to the informants and were readily available to hand (see appendix 6). The discussion topics focussed on the participants' route into 'becoming a youth worker', 'their professional roles and activities', 'the challenges and rewards of their practice', 'the influence of government youth policy on their practice today' and their ideas on 'creating youth work of value'. Each participant briefly introduced themselves to group members, before the opening question inquired into their journey to 'becoming a youth worker' (FGQ1)[3]. This was an 'ice-breaker' to lead participants into the 'business' (Goffman, 1981) of the focus group and begin to develop a rapport. It provided an early opportunity for them to discuss their 'professional selves' and thereby secure 'a footing' (ibid) in the conversation. The second question (FGQ2) functioned as a 'naïve' question to draw out descriptions of their 'taken-for-granted' 'youth work roles'. It was formulated with a qualifying statement to give guidance on the type of information that was sought. This cue to participants nudged them to generate relevant data and also encouraged their individual participation in the group process. Each participant had the opportunity to respond to each question, though the evolving social interaction brought spaces for informality and spontaneity. Time was built in for a mid-session refreshment and comfort break.

The simpler first and second questions paved the way for the more substantive third question that was seeking the workers' opinions of the 'challenges and rewards' of everyday practice (FGQ3). This question operated on the premise that there are multiple realities in which people's positions may vary, according to individual experiences and local influences. It derives from the work of Michael Billig (1991) who argues that:

> "The discourse of views, far from being based upon competing claims about external reality, will be based on statements describing different subjectivities" (Billig, 1991, 171).

[3] FGQ1 that is Focus Group Question One (and so on). Similarly IQ1 is Interview Question One (and so on)

Question four (FGQ4), which was framed and contextualised similarly to question two, introduced sources of material that might inform participants' responses. It was also exploratory in trying to tease out their individual understanding of any correlation between the macro policy level and micro service level of delivering work with young people. It served to lead participants into evaluating present policy-practice relations from their perspective.

The fifth and final question (FGQ5) sought to build on the understanding generated by question four. It was open-ended to encourage participants to formulate opinions about the topical debate on 'youth work of value'. It invited an exchange of views on the meaning of the term in the contexts in which they were working and provided space to share descriptive accounts and insights from practice. Towards the close of the session, attention was given to debriefing the focus group to check for any 'unfinished business', to thank participants for their contributions and to receive feedback on the process.

These questions can be mapped to the main research themes on table 4 as follows:

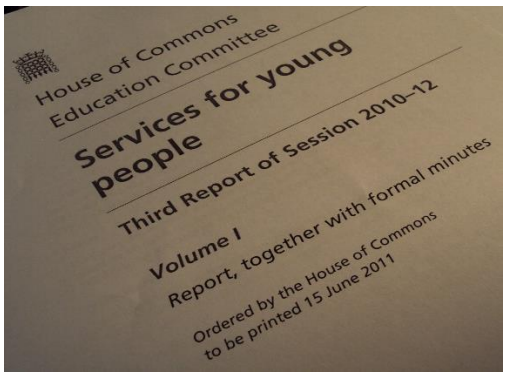
Table 4: Mapping Focus Group and Interview Questions to Research Study			
Subject of research	**Source of data Focus Groups (FG)**	**Source of data Interviews (I)**	**Method of analysis**
Youth workers' identity & sub-identities	FGQ1	IQ1; IQ2; IQ7	Thematic & discourse analyses
Present realities influencing youth work identity and practice	FGQ3 & FGQ4	IQ3; IQ5; IQ8	Thematic & discourse analyses
Youth workers' professional knowledge	FGQ2	IQ4; IQ6; IQ7	Thematic & discourse analyses
Examples of youth work of value	FGQ5	IQ4	Thematic & discourse analyses
Youth workers' construction of talk	Focus groups	Interviews	Discourse analysis

Each focus group lasted for just under two hours. In all, twelve people took part in the focus groups, five in 'Highbury' and seven in 'Thornville'. I sent a follow up email to thank participants for their attendance and then took some time to review the data I had accumulated. I listened again to the audio-recordings and, working from a rough first draft of the group discussions, formulated interview questions for the next stage of data collection.

During 2013, I had begun to accrue pieces of evidence that depicted research experiences. A selection of these images has been collated into a visual representation (table 5).

Table 5: Visual Representation of Aspects of the Research Activity

1



1.Significant document source, 2011

2

2. Room layout at focus group venue on 24.4.2013

4

4. Discussing ideas for my data analysis at BSA seminar in London on 7.11.2013

3 *Criteria to choose interviewees*

Ethical concern 'not to do harm'

I know some of these potential participants from my previous career as a youth work academic and my initial inquiry for research participants from the youth work networks may have influenced their willingness to respond positively to the research and to me.

Also youth work is under such pressure in these locations that it may appear as one of the few ways they might have their say and be listened to. Given that listening skills and fostering relationships are key qualities in good youth work, it does not seem right to turn them down out of hand.

Some of the literature on interviewing points out that the interview process is not therapy but listening may offer "mutual social support", bringing increased well-being and meaning to life (Thorsheim and Roberts, 1995, 194).

Practically there are probably too many to interview. If I interview them just in order to acknowledge them rather than include their stories, then that does not seem appropriate either. Maybe I am assuming it matters to them more than it does.

I feel a commitment to those who have expressed interest in being involved and feel that I have a dilemma in how to sort out who to interview

Reading more about the criteria for selecting suitable candidates for interview could help me.

3. Extract from fieldwork note about interviewee selection to discuss with supervisor, 16.5.2013

Sources:

1. Cover page of 'Services for Young People' report (House of Commons SEC, 2011a).
2. Researcher's photograph of room layout for first focus group, April 2013.
3. Extract of email on discussion item for meeting with thesis supervisor, May 2013.
4. Twitter image of my presentation at research seminar convened by British Sociological Association Youth Studies Group, November 2013. (Pope, 2013). NB. Power-point slide is from International Youth Work Educators Forum, NUI, Maynooth, Ireland, 2013.

It is an example of a 'visual turn' (Riessman, 2008, 142) used here to embody stories from the research process. It draws attention to the prominence of 'Services for Young People' hearings in my thinking and wish to create an inclusive focus group setting; it points to deliberations on the transition from focus group to interview stage and my subsequent attendance at a research seminar where I took some soundings on ways to handle the mass of data I had accumulated. Together, the selected images construct a research narrative. The next section looks more closely at the interview stage of the data collection.

4.4 The interviews

Qualitative interviewing or "in-depth, semi-structured forms of interviewing" (Mason, 2002, 62) is commonly used to produce empirical data. Jennifer Mason points to their typical "fluid and flexible structure" (ibid) that fosters communication of relevant experiences. Semi-structured interviews tend to produce nuanced detailed explanations, also known as 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973), that are suitable for thematic and discursive analyses. The interview is a recognised site of social interaction and meaning-making that fits social constructionist forms of epistemology (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003).

The interview was to be a dynamic process, guided by interview questions and developing as the interviewees shared their opinions and experiences. This accords with advice from King and Horrocks (2010) who recommend formulating interview questions in advance to structure research thinking and avoid leading questions. I followed these helpful suggestions, drawing up an interview guide, as set out in appendix 7 and, in addition, annotating them with an aide-memoire to enable my later recall of ideas that imbued my thinking at this time. An example of this thought process can be seen in relation to question five on 'third space identities'. This question inquired into the changing nature of occupational roles that appeared to be increasingly managerial at the expense of established professional practices. The question invited responses of how workers were managing the potentially conflicting demands between managerial and professional values. It derived from my wider reading that alluded to instances of "cognitive dissonance" (Baxter, 2011, 29) prevailing across the professions and that was contributing to instances of "principled infidelity" (Hoyle and Wallace, 2009; see 2.1 of this thesis). It was an intriguing facet of the inquiry, relevant to the idea of shifting professional identities and with the potential to discover alternative discourses, perhaps of activism, resistance or subversion as others had begun to chart in their educational research (see for example, Tilley, 2013; Portelli, 2013).

At this stage, it is useful to provide a brief overview of the range of interview questions (as captioned below with the prefix IQ). The questions inquired into a range of youth workers' opinions and experiences including 'their feelings about being a youth worker' (IQ1); 'any

influence of this locality on the nature of their practice' (IQ2); 'their views on present-day youth work realities' (IQ3); 'an invitation to share memorable youth work experiences' (IQ4) and 'an exploration of third space identities' by identifying strategies they adopted to manage the interface between agency demands and young people's needs (IQ5). There was a prompt to 'identify useful resource materials for their role' (IQ6) or 'share examples of youth work language' (IQ7); to 'give their opinion on youth work today' (IQ8); with 'an invitation to add anything else they might like to say' (IQ9) and 'provide some feedback on the process' (IQ10). These questions guided the interviews that took place in the summer of 2013.

Originally, I had thought to recruit interviewees mainly from focus groups and, with this in mind, I noted several expressions of interest from youth workers at the close of their group session. However, on further reflection, I realised that I needed to take more time to digest the focus group findings, develop the interview questions and think through the interview protocols. This led to a time delay as I deliberated over the interview selection process as demonstrated in my fieldwork note to my thesis supervisor in mid-May 2013, (see table 5, item 3). For practical reasons, I planned to interview only six youth workers, who fulfilled the 'JNC qualification' and 'face-to-face youth-working' criteria. I felt committed to those who had already volunteered and expressed interest in telling their story but needed to temper my response to ensure the sample was able to bring in the various perspectives I was seeking. In brief, this intention was to interview a similar number of male and female youth workers, to ensure equal representation from the two districts and finally to draw in additional informants with specific voluntary sector experience to augment that facet of practice. This led me to purposive sampling that was further customised by the practicalities of availability and convenience.

In July, I began to send out emails to my pool of interested and willing volunteers with a view to scheduling interviews later in the month. Unfortunately, this timing presented a problem for the youth workers as several of them were now preoccupied with other concerns, in some cases taking holidays or managing summer youth programmes. Others were in the midst of service reorganisation as part of the general down-sizing of youth services that was going on in response to funding cuts. In this climate, I was able to conduct three interviews before I again paused to reflect on the interview data gathered so far. My fieldwork note emailed to my supervisor reminds me of this stocktaking with my comments that:

> *"The participants have been really positive and so willing to talk at length about what is happening in their practice and organisations…As I now have 3 of the 6 youth interviews I wanted, I want to pause for probably 3 weeks and sort out who I want to see for the remainder and whether I need to prune the questions and so on"* (extract of email to doctoral supervisor, dated 2.8.2013).

It was August and the middle of a mini heat wave so creating a space to reflect was welcome. In support of this form of review, King and Horrocks (2010, 37-8) have argued that adapting the interview guide as one proceeds is acceptable if it enables the researcher to probe further into the area of research interest and does not necessarily imply distortion of the findings. In the event, when the interviews resumed, I used the same format to complete the data collection.

Each interview followed a similar pattern. An interview date, time and place was negotiated to suit the interviewee. Invariably, their preference was for a day time meeting in a quiet room in their workplace setting. This meeting was confirmed in advance by phone call and emailing further information and a consent form to the interviewee. The opening sequence of the interview paid attention to the practicalities of the session, explaining the use of the audio-recorder and checking that the participant was at ease in the situation. I used active listening skills to establish rapport and facilitate the interview process. The first question served to open up the discussion and begin to explore the youth worker's experience. The semi-structured nature of the interview lent itself to some extended discussions that meant questions did not always follow in the same sequence but all key areas were covered in each interview. Six interviews were held in all and varied in terms of length. Three took around an hour, two were about 90 minutes and one took two hours. This variation could be attributed to the amount of time made available by the interviewees and the ways in which they chose to talk about their practice. An alternative explanation involves analysing the 'language games' between interviewer and interviewee to establish the point at which the researcher became satisfied with the answer she received and ready to move on to the next question (Moir, 1993). This type of critique is made available through studying the interview transcript through a discursive lens and is just one of the approaches to analysis introduced in section 4.7 and applied in the findings. Before that, however, attention turns to describing the profile and demography of the research participants whose experiences were captured in the data collection.

4.5 The sample

Twenty-two youth workers took part in the research, five in the pilot and seventeen in the substantive study. This was deemed to be a sufficiently-sized diverse sample to explore the subject matter for it included workers who were professionally-qualified through several different institutions and who were working in different geographical locations and practice settings across the region.

As the research progressed, I sought to minimise any affiliation with the selection of research informants, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Overall, demographic and working context data in tables 6, 7, 8 and 9, show the diversity of the sample. Given that collating personal

information can appear intrusive, the demographic data was limited to age, gender and self-defining ethnicity categories. In addition, work role data was gathered to portray the range of youth work practices and settings and which, moreover, might contribute to explanations of contrary views should they arise in the findings.

The actual names of the youth workers have been anonymised to protect their identity. Instead they are listed with alternative first names derived from a contemporary event to the research, namely the record of 'Team GB' gold medal recipients at the Olympic Games held in London in 2012. The names were matched across gender but otherwise randomly applied. Names that are typically used by either sex are not selected here. Each name is used only once.

Table 6 lists the pilot study participants (coded P1 to P5) who were culturally diverse and included both male and female workers of varying ages. Four of this group held the JNC youth work qualification while the fifth (P5) was qualified in outdoor education.

Table 6: Pilot Study – demographics and occupational data

Code P- pilot	Research name	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Youth service sector	District
P1	Luke	M	40-49	White British	Council YS: PT, participation	3
P2	Laura	F	Under 29	Asian White	Council YS: PT, generic	3
P3	Charlotte	F	40-49	White British	Council YS: FT, participation	4
P4	Danielle	F	40-49	White British	Council YS: FT, health	1
P5	Tom	M	30-39	White British	Council: FT, outdoor education	4

All the tables give brief details of participants' employment in either the voluntary sector or council youth service (Vol/Council YS). To clarify this appellation, voluntary sector in this context means paid employment in a non-statutory agency and is different to being an unpaid volunteer. Each table describes whether the participants were working part-time or full-time (PT/FT) and the district where they worked, which was usually Highbury (1) or Thornville (2). In the case of the pilot, four participants worked elsewhere in the region, two were employed part-time in a rural youth service (listed as 3) and two worked full-time within an urban youth service (listed as 4). Some participants were in senior fieldwork roles in their organisation, managing staff as well as continuing to be involved in face-to-face work. The additional information indicates whether it is generic practice in a youth project or a specific form of youth work such as 'outreach' or 'street-based'; faith-based; to do with participation (for example, by

facilitating the local young people's forum); or with a focus on the arts, health or outdoor education. All those taking part in the main substantive study held the JNC qualification.

The main sample was recruited through the four intermediaries (as discussed earlier) and they facilitated access to youth workers in their networks. Twelve workers took part in the focus groups, six took part in the interviews. One person (M6) from Thornville attended both stages of the focus group and interview. Table 7 illustrates the spread of participants across districts, the intermediary agencies through which these workers were recruited to the research project and the dates of the respective focus groups.

Table 7: Substantive Study - membership of focus groups across districts and agencies

Date of Focus Group	District	Organisation	Participant
24 April 2013	District 1 'Highbury'	Service A	Sophie Helen
		University D	Jason Ed Scott
2 May 2013	District 2 'Thornville'	Service B	Jade Peter
		Agency C	Andy Katherine
		University D	Carl Alistair Philip

Ethnicity information is omitted in participant data on the substantive study as all the youth workers identified themselves as 'White British'. Age data shows that approximately one-third of participants fell into each of the categories of 'under 29', '30-39' and 'over 40'.

Table 8: Substantive Study Focus Groups - demographics and occupational data					
Code	**Research name**	**Gender**	**Age**	**Youth Service sector**	**District**
M1	Jason	M	Under 29	Vol: FT, faith, community, health	1
M2	Sophie	F	30-39	Council YS: FT, health, schools	1
M3	Helen	F	30-39	Council YS: FT, youth dance	1
M4	Ed	M	Under 29	Vol: FT, faith, generic YW	1
M5	Scott	M	Under 29	Vol: FT, senior YW	1
M6	Andy	M	30-39	Vol: FT, outreach project co-ordinator	2
M7	Carl	M	30-39	Vol: FT, church youth development worker	2
M8	Peter	M	30-39	Council YS: PT, generic YW	2
M9	Jade	F	Under 29	Council YS: FT, generic YW	2
M10	Philip	M	Under 29	Vol: FT, generic YW	2
M11	Alistair	M	30-39	Vol: FT, youth ministry YW	2
M12	Katherine	F	Over 50	Vol: FT, health, senior YW	2

Table 9: Substantive Study Interviews – demographics and occupational data					
Code	**Name & date of interview**	**Gender**	**Age**	**Youth service sector**	**District**
M6	Andy 2.8.2013	M	30-39	Vol: FT, outreach project co-ordinator	2
M13	Greg 31.7.2013	M	Over 50	Council YS: FT, team leader, generic YW	1
M14	Victoria 2.8.2013	F	Under 29	Vol: FT, outreach development YW	2
M15	Ben 20.9.2013	M	40-49	Vol: FT, team leader, generic YW	2
M16	Jessica 20.9.2013	F	40-49	Council YS: FT, health YW	1
M17	Nicola 20.9.2013	F	Over 50	Council YS: FT, outreach team leader	1

4.6 Forms of data analysis

This section of the methodology introduces the transcribing protocols and forms of analyses that are applied to the corpus of data. It begins with an account of early transcribing activities that created useful working transcripts from audio-recordings of focus groups and helped with formulating interview questions. It continues by explaining subsequent transcription activities that produced data transcripts suitable for thematic and discursive analyses.

Transcribing digital recordings for analysis is a painstaking and time consuming process. Moreover, the transcript is often perceived as incomplete and 'partial' (Mason, 2002, 77), for

it seldom captures every detail of verbal and nonverbal interaction in just the way in which it was produced at the time. This became clear to me an early stage. A secretarial colleague familiar with typing audio-recordings assisted me by producing a rough first draft of 3¾ hours of focus group recordings that amounted to a memorable 75 pages of A4. This assistance was helpful at this stage for it enabled me to have a quick scan of the various conversations that had arisen but it was also a forewarning of the volume of work that lay ahead. Jonathan Potter is among those who welcome this early production of transcripts "rendered as effectively as the (*transcription*) service can hear them" (Potter, 2012, 19) for it provides an accessible overview of research material. Nevertheless, these rough drafts would require time and careful reworking to produce suitable extracts for detailed analysis. Thinking about ways to handle this mass of data preoccupied me for some time and was the 'research issue' I took to the British Sociological Association Youth Studies Group in November 2013 (table 5, image 4). This was evidently a common research dilemma that might be alleviated by beginning to analyse just a small section of the data (Silverman, 2011).

I began to process the data by re-reading the early transcripts to increase my familiarity with different attributes of the text. This was backed up by replaying the audio-recordings to assist me in identifying suitable extracts to illustrate emerging phenomena, such as 'the impact of funding cuts on service provision', within the research findings. Firstly, I charted the frequency in which this issue arose across all the data and catalogued each location. Then I replayed the relevant sections of the audio-recordings to fill in any omissions on this topic on this first 'partial' transcript draft. I used a coloured pen to highlight the range of views about the topic and made a separate note of its location and the aspect that interested me in that extract. These accumulated notes provided an index of typical and deviant views about the topic and connected the original data to the first stage of analysis. This led to a more complete text for each extract, from which I could select a few examples to illustrate the phenomenon in the findings.

As well as analysing themes in the data, I applied a narrative-discursive approach to investigate the way participants constructed accounts of practice. This involved selecting particular extracts to annotate with transcription symbols derived from 'conversation analysis' to capture details of social interaction. Appendix 8 offers an explanation of transcription symbols and a glossary of specific discursive terms, such as 'discourse', 'subject position' and 'three-part list' that are used in the analysis. The transcripts were subjected to more than one form of analysis to illuminate different perspectives on the data. To summarise, firstly, thematic analysis was used to delve into the substance of what youth workers said about their roles and practices. Secondly, narrative analysis enabled me to explore some of the subject positions and rhetorical devices that contributed to participants' accounts of their professional

roles or stories of 'youth work of value'. Thirdly, conversation analysis allowed me to study the construction of talk and interaction between participants. The approach to these analyses is discussed in the following sections.

4.6.1Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is often used in qualitative research to identify and codify common themes across the corpus of data. It begins through data familiarisation that leads into perceiving a thematic framework where "themes are recurrent and distinctive features of participants' accounts, characterising particular perceptions and/ or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question" (King and Horrocks, 2010, 150). This is followed by "indexing, charting, mapping and interpretation" of the thematic framework (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994, 178), thereby providing a series of steps which I followed in my data analysis.

The preliminary transcribing procedures described earlier produced 'the open coding of data', which is illustrated in appendix 9. Each recurring aspect such as 'voluntary work' was labelled with a descriptive code derived from the data and brought into sub-themes that were contributing to a common theme. During this process, as the data became more familiar, some sub-themes were redefined to reflect more closely the sense of the data. Table 10 gives an example of sub-themes that were collated through 'indexing the data' (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994, 180) and which contributed to one particular theme:

Table 10 : Example of sub-themes contributing to major theme YWID 1A 'Shaping and directing a route into youth work'	
Voluntary and paid work experience	Realisation youth work was a job
Influence of significant adult	Motivation (e.g. faith; altruism)

This theme 'Shaping and directing a route into youth work' (YWID1A - where YWID refers to Youth Work Identity) was then mapped into a larger grouping of associated themes, in this case 'Becoming a youth worker- background experiences and training'. Table 11 lists the six over-arching themes or categories that emerged from the data.

Table 11: Overarching Themes: 'Youth workers' identity and sub-identities' (YWID)	
1	'Becoming a youth worker - background experiences and training'
2	'Sharing youth work values and professional ethos'
3	'Leading at the same time as serving - knowledge, skills and roles in youth work practice'
4	'Moving from practice tensions to practice wisdom'
5	'Changing times – diminishing funding and increasing managerialism'
6	'Being professional youth workers – where to now?'

These six categories reflected facets of youth work identities and practices that arose from this researcher's analysis of the data. Appendix 10 displays themes and sub-themes making up each category, while appendix 11 gives an example of the representative nature of the findings in terms of three participants across these categories. Finally, attention is directed to the salient findings of the thematic analysis that appear in Chapters Five and Six.

In addition to thematic analysis, this study uses a 'narrative-discursive approach' (Bamberg, undated) to look more closely into the social construction of the data. The value of using a mixed methods "discursive narrative approach" (Sutherland et al. 2013, 1) was attested to recently by Sutherland and her associates as they analysed both narrative structure and discursive practices in their research into online autobiographical accounts of self-injury. This blended methods approach provided an exemplar for the present research study.

4.6.2 Narrative analysis

This method of analysis responds to research interest in studying participants' use of narrative forms to relate their experiences. Firstly, the analysis here draws primarily on the work of Gergen (2009) and Wetherell (2001b) to look into elements of 'narrative construction' (Gergen, 2009, 37-38) that display rhetorical dexterity and imbue narratives with a "persuasive voice" (Clough, 2002, 68). Such rhetoric may indicate participants' stake in the process as they use language to 'construct a version of social reality' to 'win hearts and minds' (Wetherell, 2001a, 17).

Secondly, it uses discursive tools to study the social interaction, meaning-making and identity formation processes at work in the discourse. These particular discursive tools were collated by James Paul Gee (2014a, 2014b), who analysed the grammatical use of language to see how speakers were "saying (informing), doing (action) and being (identity)" (Gee, 2014a, 8). He posited a 'working with identities building tool' (Gee, 2014b, 112) whereby the speaker creates an identity for him or herself and may also position others in social situations. Gee argues that we talk and act in meaningful ways according to our socio-cultural discursive repertoire and this enables us to construct one of many possible identities (such as son or daughter, feminist, pragmatist, expert or novice, manager or worker, and so on) according to situation and context.

Some of the benefits of using Gee's model of identity as a research tool were articulated by Jenny Johnston (2012) in her study of teachers' identity. Johnston argued that the methodology preserved individual voices in the data, gave deeper insight into different experiences and avoided over-generalisations. Her work offered a useful precedent that could inform the discursive use of Gee's identity tool in this research study. By closer scrutiny of the data, workers' discursive practices in constructing identities are brought to the fore. These

approaches are in keeping with a social constructionist and interpretivist stance and the research interest in exploring youth work practices and identities.

Thirdly, it looks into the use of 'subject positioning' (Davies and Harré, 1990) through which narrators position themselves and render accounts of their experiences (Gergen, 2009, 69-71). Here, discourse functions as the medium through which individuals interpret different realities and forge identities, contributing to a social psychological view of selfhood closer to Ibarra's provisional sense of role identity (see 2.4 of this thesis) and the underpinning social constructionist research position. Finally, the 'discursive approach to narrating' (Bamberg, 2004, 2006) used in this study, drew on theoretical models of social interaction identified by conversation analysts in their studies of 'language in use'.

4.6.3 Conversation Analysis

It was recognised that Conversation Analysis (or CA) could provide the means to investigate more closely the constructive nature of the research data. The first champions of CA - Harvey Sacks, Gail Jefferson and Emanuel Schegloff - developed it as a method for studying the organisation of everyday speech in social and work settings (Sacks et al., 1974; Sacks, 1992; Jefferson, 1984, 1989; Schegloff, 1984). Its popularity is evident in a range of discursive studies including, for example, David Silverman's (1997) study of sensitive issues in HIV counselling and Robin Wooffitt's (2001) research into psychic practice. Among its attributes, CA asserts that its studies of social interaction are "context-free" and "context-sensitive" (Sacks et al., 1974) and that there is autonomy of the data (Wetherell, 2001b), for interested parties may review the final transcripts independently in order to study the interpretation.

The CA approach involves applying keyboard notation to transcripts of audio-recordings to create a visual record of dialogical interaction. Particular symbols representing features of speech such as overlapping talk, latched responses, pauses and so on (see appendix 8), are used to focus in on the 'naturally occurring talk'[4] and analyse the components of the interaction order. The analysis commonly involves studying a sequence of talk to see how speakers design their conversational turns to suit the setting and how they orientate to preceding talk and produce 'adjacency pairings' (Wooffitt, 2001) as in a question-answer exchange. Jonathan Potter (1996) argues that a CA analysis of talk sequences can reveal 'stake inoculation' (Potter, 1996, 125), through which a speaker may preface their remarks to imply neutrality and increase the credibility of their story.

[4] In this research study, 'naturally occurring talk' is defined as "material which is obtained when the researcher has permission to record and the participants have become sufficiently accustomed to the presence of the recording equipment to act as if it was not operating" (Taylor, 2001, 27)

Another facet of CA is its concept of 'membership identification'. CA proponents argue that "people construct, establish, reproduce, and negotiate their identities, roles, and relationships in conversational interaction" (Drew and Heritage, 1992, 2). This is said to occur as speakers identify with a particular group, known as 'membership category device' (MCD), leading them to display associated activities of membership of that group (known as 'category-bound activity' or CBA) (Silverman, 2011). Thus, by introducing myself as a youth work researcher (MCD), I give myself a meaningful frame of reference and lay claim to behaviours associated with that role. Similarly, I wanted to see how youth work identities were manifested through the MCDs and CBAs adopted by research participants in the data.

4.7 Ethical considerations - strengths and limitations of research design

This research study has demonstrable ethical underpinnings. It was sanctioned through the university ethical research committee and implemented through youth workers' voluntary participation in the project. Its ethical approach was embedded through informed consent, collaboration in the co-production of data, respecting of confidences and anonymising of findings. My research role fitted the Scott and Usher (1999) model of 'open autocratic' research rather than their alternative depictions of the 'covert' hidden research role or the 'open democratic' research stance that includes the participants' right of veto over data. My adoption of an 'open' approach was evident because it included the provision of an information sheet setting out the purpose of the research and inviting workers' voluntary participation and informed consent to take part in the project. The role also appears to sit within the 'autocratic' model because I had a list of question areas (circulated in advance) that I wished to explore, albeit through a semi-structured process. I clearly had power in the conduct of the research for I made the preliminary contact with agencies and participants, negotiated a suitable venue and timing of the session, facilitated the focus group and interview, then took the data away to analyse it. Steps were taken to address some of this imbalance of power relations by checking out whether the participants had said all they wished as the group or interview was coming towards a close. To this end, I asked: "is there anything else you would like to say about your youth work practice that we haven't touched on today" (Interview question IQ9). Finally, I used question ten (IQ10) to gather feedback on the interview and research process:

Table 12: Questions to elicit interview and research feedback (IQ10)
(a) How was the interview process for you? (b) What has been the effect of doing our interview in this setting? (c) What do you think might be useful for the youth work sector from this research? (d) What might help you to develop your own youth work research and writing skills?

It has been suggested that this type of composite question functions as an auditing technique to capture participants' views of research procedures and may contribute to claims of their 'dependability' (Guba, 1981). Moreover, in its final part, I ask what might be helpful to encourage them in their research activities, thereby signifying an interest in capacity-building rather than monopolising the role of researcher. Through these steps, it may be inferred that the study is positioned to have beneficial rather than harmful effects, for it exhibits the potential to share power through the interview questions and exchange of information.

The research design has value in its anti-oppressive overtones for it not only brings professional youth work to the forefront but also raises awareness of young people's lives. In doing so, it recognises that young people are a marginalised social grouping with limited political power in the mainstream that tends to be dominated by adult narratives and priorities. Frequently, young people's voices are silenced or minimalized by more dominant agendas. Recent evidence of these ongoing realities come through in the initiatives to address young gender inequalities (Msunderstood, www.msunderstood.org.uk); in a report by the University and College Lecturers' Union that 'Unemployed youth feel marginalised' (British Psychological Society, 2013, 16.7.2013) and in the Family Mediation Task Force's report who assert the urgency of 'Hearing the voice of children and young people' (Ministry of Justice, 2014). Thus, the third interview question that invited youth workers to share examples of 'here and now realities for young people' (IQ3) was a deliberate choice to bring the present situation of young people into the research domain.

The commitment to addressing young people's needs was implied in the focus group question on 'youth work of value' (FGQ5) that was exploring inherent meanings of this phraseology for youth workers. Some instances of good practice were later shared by consent between participating organisations as part of the research interaction. I initiated this exchange by introducing the example of 'Policing Dialogues' that explored the power relationship between young people and the police; its insights were subsequently embedded in Gardai (police) training in South Dublin (http://section8.ie/wordpress/). Overall, this was believed to be a flexible research design that would confer trust as it sought to avoid exploiting vulnerabilities in the situation of young people or youth workers and would produce relevant data of interest to the sector.

The following chapter on research findings demonstrates the productive nature of the research design in generating descriptions and explanations of youth work practice. This mass of data has to be approached with caution for, as Silverman (2011) advises, anecdotal qualitative data may raise questions of consistency and reliability. To address such concerns and aid transparency, instances of both agreeing and contrary cases are discussed in the findings.

The research does not just rely on the sample providing typical answers that suit the researcher, for it draws on contemporary documents to contextualise these views. Moreover, it uses the potential of discourse analysis to study the construction of these accounts of the youth work phenomenon.

Chapter 5 Thematic findings on youth workers' identities and sub-identities – part 1

In the following two chapters, the findings that emerged from the thematic analysis of the data are presented. They were collated following a process of data familiarisation, as discussed in Chapter Four, and involved replaying the audio-recordings and re-reading the transcripts, which drew the researcher's attention not only to recurring themes but also to speaker rhetoric and social interaction in the production of these accounts. Chapters Five and Six focus on the first of these areas - the thematic analysis of the data - while Chapter Seven looks into the discursive construction of the data.

The thematic analysis began with the 'open coding' of data to describe the ideas suggested by the transcript content. Then, similar items were collated together and coded to constitute a minor theme. As more data was added, the coding of minor themes was adjusted to ensure that they fully reflected the nuances of the data. These minor themes were then brought together to produce major themes that were perceived to be relevant, rich descriptions of particular aspects of the subject matter. These major themes were then grouped into six categories and given titles evoked by their data sets.

The six categories of 'Youth workers' identity and sub-identities' (YWID 1-6) are set out in Table 13 with brief descriptions that helped to standardise the coding of the data in each category.

Table 13: Overarching Themes with Brief Descriptions of Categories YWID1 - YWID6

	Overarching theme	Brief description
1	**'Becoming a youth worker - background experiences and training'**	Workers build on background experiences and initial training in theory and practice of youth work to foster professional formation as youth workers.
2	**'Sharing youth work values and professional ethos'**	This can be characterised as internalising the principles, values and beliefs of this community of practice.
3	**'Leading at the same time as serving - knowledge, skills and roles in youth work practice'**	Their knowledge and skills emerge in their everyday practice.
4	**'Moving from practice tensions to practice wisdom'**	Some misconceptions of youth work roles and processes have to be overcome to strengthen inter-agency partnership work.
5	**'Changing times – diminishing funding and increasing managerialism'**	Funding shortfalls and managerial practices are contributing to professional dilemmas.
6	**'Being professional youth workers – where to now?'**	Amid mixed reflections on the professional status of youth work, there are instances of ongoing commitment and legacy.

Noticeably, some broad concepts such as ‘education’ appeared in more than one thematic category as participants drew out its different meanings in particular contexts. Thus ‘education’ was a recurring theme, appearing in ‘Becoming a youth worker’ for the formative educational experiences that inducted the worker into professional youth work; in ‘Sharing the values’, where it captured a belief in a rounded education for young people; in ‘Leading at the same time as serving’, that recognised youth workers were informal educators, and so on.

The categories represent the youth worker’s journey into professional youth work (coded as Youth Work Identity, YWID 1-3) and their experiences of practice in subsequent times (YWID 4-6). They are structured in a sequence that begins with formative life experiences that drew these participants into youth work. The next two categories take account of their progression in this profession as they internalise its principles and values that then inform their knowledge, skill and roles in everyday practice. The fourth category looks into some of their wider professional experiences with the general public, other agencies and schools. This leads into the fifth category in which funding shortfalls and the imposition of managerial practices are identified as contributing to professional dilemmas. The final category concludes with workers’ perceptions of the present standing and positioning of their profession. Additional material to support these thematic categories and descriptive codes can be found in appendices 12 and 13. It was deemed appropriate to include these additional examples for they demonstrate the richness of the data, support the viability of this thematic analysis, reveal the diversity of youth work practices and enable a range of youth work voices to be heard within the thesis.

Following this initial overview, attention now turns to look in more detail at the first three categories of themes and their supporting data extracts.

YWID1: ‘Becoming a youth worker – background experiences and training’

Tucker (2009, 88-89) has pointed out that the forging of professional identity is a complex, fluid process, in which individual experience and ambitions converge and diverge within the pool of training cultures, socio-political discourses and contemporary practices. The shifting attributes of such incipient identity formation became visible in the first major theme of this category, ‘Becoming a youth worker - background experiences and training’ (table 14), which was generated by participants sharing stories of early experiences that led them into youth work.

Table 14: YWID1 ‘Becoming a youth worker - background experiences and training’

	Theme	**Data extracts**
A	Shaping and directing a route into youth work	- ‘Accidental, did not know it was a job’, - ‘Volunteering’, - Being ‘inspired by’ role models or mentors.

B	Developing understanding of adolescent issues and ways to help	- 'Difficult backgrounds, tough upbringings', - 'Seeing the difference just one week of us being there made, it said I have got to do this for a job'.
C	The appeal of working with young people	- 'The energy, the challenge quite often, but the fun', - 'The potential in them is just so real'.
D	Opening doors through education	- 'What you learnt at Uni helps you hit the ground running', - 'Just constantly learning'.

YWID1A: 'Shaping and directing a route into youth work'

It was evident that youth and community work was a chosen career pathway, even though initially, the participants' accounts suggested some may have stumbled into it accidentally, often after working as a volunteer with a youth group. The impetus towards becoming a youth worker appeared to owe much to their appreciation of the difficulties adolescents often face. Some participants pointed to their own life experiences when the support of a 'significant' adult had helped them through a difficult time. It was apparent that this form of guidance and mentoring continued to be influential into adulthood and provided role models of youth work practice:

> "We had a family kind of personal tragedy, but I had a youth worker at my church who really took me under her wing, did one-on-one mentoring; also got me involved in being a youth leader volunteer" (Jason, 711_0013, 05.05-18).

> "I started as a volunteer as well, that's a bit of a theme I think isn't it, and I was inspired by … a youth worker and he just seemed to love what he was doing… and he said you could do this and it just never occurred to me that I could, after I had been volunteering for a while, this is a job that I could do you know" (Alistair, 711_0019, 12.14-48).

Many of these youth workers attested to being volunteers in youth projects. Being a volunteer appeared to offer meaningful personal and work-related experiences as well as being fun. In fact, voluntaryism in youth and community work has a long tradition; it was seen in nineteenth century philanthropy that created voluntary youth organisations to meet local needs and was more recently taken up by those advocating 'The Big Society' as was discussed earlier. The data here suggests that it continues to be a recognised pathway into the 'social professions'.

YWID1B: 'Developing understanding of adolescent issues and ways to help'

A strong source of motivation to becoming a youth worker was the workers' own experiences of adolescence coupled with understanding gained from fieldwork practice with young people. Some participants referred to their own 'troublesome' experiences of adolescence:

> "A lot of people on the course [for young adults] were kind of like a similar ilk to myself and you know from really difficult backgrounds, tough upbringings, but when you see what happens on a twelve week development project with young people, it's amazing" (Andy, 711_0019, 00.58-01.12).

This appreciation of adolescent difficulties often coincided with their own mixed experiences of schooling that had left some workers feeling disillusioned and with a general feeling that "education was not for me". Their later discovery that other forms of education could be both fun and developmental often fuelled their desire to use youth work to put those learning opportunities in place for other young people:

There was, furthermore, a belief that youth work could make a difference in young lives:

> "You ended up having like eight-year-olds up to twenty-odd-year-olds turning up for this youth week and you couldn't turn them away because they were just so desperate to have somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to and seeing what the difference just one week of us being there made, it said I have got to do this for a job" (Philip, 711_0019, 11.32-11.52).

YWID1C: 'The appeal of working with young people'

Several references were made to the fun of working with young people. The enthusiasm of young people and their diverse interests could be invigorating, stimulating a varied programme of activities that offered new experiences to both the young people and to the adults:

> "You know, I've met just so many amazing people and I think it is just that, what everybody said about, just young people you know … the energy, the challenge quite often, but the fun, you know. I mean again, you know, when I first started doing youth work, I had never been camping before. When I started youth work full-time, I had never walked up more than a little hill and then I was up Snowdon, you know" (Katherine, 711_0019, 16.24-16.57).

The work was often exciting and challenging for the youth workers as they responded to young people's needs and developed their practice in different settings.

YWID1D: 'Opening doors through education'

The initial youth work experience and training usually enabled progression into a pathway of professional education in youth work and attainment of a university degree. In fact, two participants remarked on their surprise at successfully achieving this award for it stood in marked contrast to some earlier negative experiences of formal education:

> "Because I wasn't and am still not that academic" (Ed, 711_0013, 03.16-03.18) and
>
> "I am not academic but I am a really good youth worker; I still passed but just about passed, but for me as like, well I needed that to be a manager so hey-ho, but I have got passion in the job" (Jade, 711_0023, 03.42-04.00).

There was general recognition that achieving their professional JNC award led into another stage of development for there was a lot more learning to do on leaving university and entering full-time youth work employment. This perception of their professional journey taking shape as a continuous process of learning, reflection and adjustment fits with theories offered by Kolb's 'Experiential Learning Cycle' (1984), Schön's constructions of 'reflective practice' (1987) and Eraut's typology of professional development (1994). In some cases, this development through the interweaving of personal and professional selves was ably described by workers in terms of:

> "A continuous development of myself as a person … My personal kind of journey of developing as a professional youth worker" (Andy, 711_0031, 04.06-10; 04.46-53).

It was similarly endorsed by Ben, whose repetition of 'hopefully' appeared to emphasise that developing as a worker was a heartfelt wish:

> "Hopefully I'm not the same youth worker I was this time last year. Hopefully you know, I am more informed, I've got more experience; hopefully I am calmer" (Ben, 711_0043, 08.12-08.27).

Overall, the comments suggest an openness to learning and being on a professional journey:

> "Over time I have just learnt that, you know, you're just constantly learning and constantly changing your programme and how you do things, and the terms when you don't change or move forward, you notice attendance goes down and you think, oh OK, I need to really think about how I can keep this moving because you know youth culture is kind of moving so quickly, and quicker and quicker every year it seems" (Ed, 711_0013, 03.44- 04.17).

The data conjures up images of dynamic identities constantly evolving in response to learning and reflection on experiences. Their formative youth work training has not only fostered a learning disposition but also inculcated professional values, which is considered in the next section.

YWID2: ‘Sharing youth work values and professional ethos’

The second category, ‘Sharing youth work values and professional ethos’ set out in table 15, describes some of the youth work values and beliefs that are often heard in youth workers’ conversations about practice.

Table 15: YWID2 ‘Sharing youth work values and professional ethos’		
	Theme	**Data extracts**
A	Abiding by the core values	- ‘Core values…they tie into everything’, - ‘It’s about people sharing the values as well’.
B	Addressing equal opportunities	- ‘Equality…shone out with youth work for me’, - ‘Treat people with consideration for their differences’.
C	Voluntary relationship	- ‘A voluntary relationship’, - ‘Still a voluntary relationship as such’.
D	Empowering practice	- ‘Allow young people grown up interaction that was not quelling them’, - ‘Empower young people with giving them a voice’.
E	Holistic view of education	- ‘You are pretty much trying to cover life for this young person’, - ‘As youth workers, we want to educate people for other reasons than them becoming rich you know’.
F	Professional ethos	- ‘Inclined to be a little hard on myself’, - ‘You’re looking at what you do’.

Typically, these professional values include believing in equal opportunities and anti-oppressive practice, being committed to voluntary relationships with young people and enabling young people to have more power in situations that affect them. These ideas permeate the professional literature; see, for example, Thompson (2005) on ‘anti-discriminatory practice’, Gore (2007) on ‘leading and managing anti-oppressive practice’ and Davies (2005, 8-12; 2015, 101-103) where he revisits ‘the voluntary principle’ and argues for ‘tipping balances of power in young people’s favour’. In particular, it is this prizing of the ‘voluntary relationship’ and ‘empowering practice’ that is distinguishing youth work from other practice settings where young people are compelled to attend.

YWID2A: ‘Abiding by the core values’

Frequent references to the centrality of youth work values indicate that they are of abiding concern for these youth workers in determining what constitutes ethical youth work:

> “You’ve got the empowerment, you’ve got the education and you’ve got all the other core values of youth work that we have to tie into everything which have all now been very formalised, whereas in reality, they - if you’re doing your job properly - they happen anyway” (Carl, 711_0020, 08.17-08.28).

It was argued that team members needed a shared understanding of these values in order to work effectively together. Moreover, it was asserted that a shared understanding could not be assumed, “I think it is important to check out those values and that you are all sort of working from the same premise really” (Katherine, 711_0023, 07.43-07.51) Misinterpretations here could cause conflict and create practice tensions, which is a perspective considered further in a later data set (see YWID5E).

YWID2B: ‘Addressing equal opportunities’

The discourse that equality matters was well developed. It recognised the difference that an inclusive youth work approach could make at the personal level by not patronising individuals but tailoring experiences to individual needs:

> “Equal opportunities and diversity; it’s not until, you know, when you do your training, you understand what is expected of you; you understand that you have got to treat people with consideration for their differences” (Greg, 711_0028, 12.57-13.15).

In addition, the youth workers were cognizant of the wider implications of an inclusive, emancipatory discourse that would seek to tackle social injustice in the wider public domain:

> “Social justice is, it’s equality, you know the Hillsborough campaign and you know these sorts of things and fighting racism and you know opposing oppressive practice and sexism and homophobia” (Ben, 711_ 0044, 07.03-07.18).

This breadth of vision echoes published statements of professional youth work values and principles over the last twenty-five years (Banks, 2010; Davies, 2015). Moreover, there were continuing glimpses of this wider vision in the data when, for example, a youth worker reflected on investing a lot of time in supporting a young woman who was dealing with “massive issues”; in due course, this young woman was able to move on in her life, re-entering education and “doing voluntary work for families fighting for justice” (Victoria, ‘changing lives’, 711_0037). It was evident that the workers were constantly paying attention to youth work values and principles in their practice.

YWID2C: ‘Voluntary relationship’

It was noted that this ‘voluntary relationship’ principle, in which young people could choose whether to approach youth workers, was coming under increasing pressure. This appeared in part due to the deployment of youth workers into more formal settings, such as youth offending teams and schools. The participants discussed working in such settings and referred to instances of some young people being perceived as ‘problems’ and being sent to the youth worker to ‘sort out’:

> "I think it's about being clear that we're not the person that you send your badly-behaved young people to; you know, 'go and see the youth worker'; that's so damaging for us and so damaging for our relationship with them, you know; it should be voluntary. That's the whole thing about youth work, you know; young people come to us because there's a need and because it's their need" (Jessica, 711_0049, 09.15-09.34).

The voluntary engagement process was also being squeezed by the managerial emphasis on measuring the value of youth work in terms of the number of interventions rather than the quality of the interaction (see YWID5C). Despite these operational constraints, there appeared to be a conscious effort to nurture young people's voluntary engagement with their provision.

> "I incorporate schools' work into my job because I get to meet all the local young people and then hopefully that means they will start come along to our Friday night club and our Sunday night club and other stuff so that it becomes a voluntary relationship" (Carl, 711_0023, 22.33-22.38).

YWID2D: 'Empowering practice'

The young person's voluntary choosing to become involved with youth workers appeared to be the starting point for the youth workers' ideas on empowering practice:

> "That desire to allow young people to have the space and the grown-up interaction that was not quelling them but was actually saying, 'Wow, you are really excited by this and you want to know more so let's work it out, let's find out, let's do something with it', 'cos I didn't have that" (Carl, 711_0019, 09.07-09.28).

Changing the power dynamics involved 'starting where the young person is at' and seeing things in a young person friendly way rather than from the dominant adult point of view:

> "Not doing things to young people, but doing things with young people; giving them things to do things for themselves. You know you're going from working within their context and not sort of changing it to suit ours" (Greg, 711_0028, 07.36-07.51).

Ideas of giving young people more say about issues affecting them and real power in decision-making about resources have proved contentious in the public domain. It has led to arguments over the use of power and conflicting interpretations of 'youth' and other marginalised groups in society. Youth workers as advocates of young people are also positioned by this discourse and this has consequences for some of the mixed perceptions of youth work practice (see YWID4A).

It was evident that there was consensus amongst the research participants that equality of opportunity, voluntary engagement and empowering practice were meaningful precepts and

provided a framework for ethical practice. Moreover, they appeared to coalesce around a view that youth work was to do with 'education for life', that it was to do with helping young people learn through different experiences and that this would help them now and in later years.

YWID2E: 'Holistic view of education'

These beliefs appeared to be promoting an idealistic view of the nature of youth work. It was a service that sought "to inspire them or help them be inspired and find their inspiration with their creativity (in) what they are wanting to do in life" (Helen, 711_0014, 01.11-01.20). As such, the youth workers tended to subscribe to a holistic view of education:

> "I think that's one of the great things about youth work though, is that you are pretty much trying to cover life for this young person and you know it attracts all sorts because you can involve all your interests" (Ed, 711_0013, 12.22-12.34).

Moreover, it was to do with believing that:

> "knowledge and learning is a good thing just on its own you know… as youth workers we want to educate people for other reasons than them becoming rich you know, and the economy is not our purpose (Alistair, 711_2200, 11.05-11.42).

This 'holistic' point of view appears to match the aims of youth work set out in the QAA Subject Benchmarks for Youth and Community Work:

> "The purpose of youth and community work is to promote the education, development and flourishing of young people and communities with whom they work, in the context of promoting social justice" (QAA, 2009, 12).

Ed's remark above that he is "trying to cover life for this young person" appears to fit in well with the stated purpose of youth work, "to promote the education, development and flourishing of young people". However, given that such a vision does not easily win support or resources by those who perceive 'youth' differently, the benchmarks emphasise the need for youth workers to have "a strong sense of their own professional identity, enabling them to engage critically with a variety of policy contexts and with complex fields of accountability" (ibid). In fact, being conscious of their professional identity was a recurring theme in workers' conversations and it is to their ideas of 'being professional' that attention now turns.

YWID2F: 'Professional ethos'

The workers' accounts of their values in practice were typically associated with a belief in professionalism. Their discernible talk about 'being professional' not only alluded to achieving

the professional JNC qualification and being recognised as a professional worker in other arenas but also gave precedence to working ethically with young people:

> "I think I maintain a professional approach to things. I'm professional in terms based within my profession of being a youth worker and my youth work training… I value the values and ethics and approaches that I got from my training initially and… it reinforced my beliefs in the way I wanted to work so it…is probably why I am so passionate about sticking with that sort of approach and making sure that it's not sort of diluted in any way" (Greg, 711_0029, 07.43-08.30).

Given the strength of the participants' endorsement of their value base, the next category of themes looks into ways these values and beliefs are integrated into youth work practice.

YWID3: 'Leading at the same time as serving - knowledge, skills and roles in practice'

The third thematic category of 'Leading at the same time as serving' was a form of words derived from the data. It was an interesting turn of phrase for it appeared to capture the diverse positioning of youth workers in their work with young people

> "I think one of the main, almost like a constant within youth work, is that you are kind of leading at the same time you are serving but also being aware of the demographic in the audience and the people who you are talking to and communicating to. It is like you were saying, it is very much like, it's almost like you, you go as a youth worker but you have a catalogue of different approaches or different things that you can use" (Scott, 711_0014, 11.11-11.36).

It was recognised that 'leading' and 'serving' were not only words of action but held deeper meaning in the canons of youth work and the professions. Firstly, the terms 'youth leaders' and 'leading' were originally used to describe youth work roles until they were supplanted by the more egalitarian term of 'youth workers'. And secondly, 'serving' has overtones of the older professional disciplines, for it appears to evoke ideas of 'vocation' and 'service to others'. This category (see table 16) was constructed as a space to peruse the range of youth work roles, skills and knowledge, not as a finite list, but rather to sample typical youth work knowledge and practices, which were arising in participants' testimonies.

Table 16: YWID3 'Leading at the same time as serving - knowledge, skills and roles in practice'		
	Theme	**Data extracts**
A	Knowledge of the realities of young lives	- 'Those challenges of adolescence', - 'Expectations - incredibly low, unattainably high'.
B	Building relationships with young people and in the community	- 'The relationship is key', - 'A part of the furniture in terms of the community'.
C	Being an informal educator	- 'The consistent role of the informal educator', - 'You reinforce that learning by reflecting back to them'.
D	Youth work skills in practice	- 'Flexibility, creativity and professionalism', - 'Ideas from young people and you facilitating that'.
E	Facilitating project and group work processes	- 'Think in action' and 'switch it up', - 'Group work - very beneficial'.
F	Listening, advocacy, mentoring and range of one-to-one work	- 'The core of it is that whole just listening to young people', - 'Having to stand up for young people', - 'To kind of catch it when things are falling apart'.
G	Managing administration	- 'More time in the office than with young people', - 'The time you are spending on admin'.
H	The diversity of work roles	- 'From strategizing to paper mâchéing balloons', - 'Everything from cleaning the office to doing the budget'.

YWID3A: 'Knowledge of the realities of young lives'

The youth workers showed a detailed understanding of the 'here and now' realities facing young people. Some of these issues, including the impact of family breakdown, the pressure of school expectations and misuse of social media, are explored briefly below and then followed by discussion of youth workers' skills that address such concerns.

> "One of my roles at the moment started out as anger management in a local high school … It is now more one-to-one sort of issue sorting, problem-solving group if you like, so basically it is anger management, they all had anger issues in class. No, they didn't. Every one of them have (sic) got a family breakdown and something quite serious is happening within each young person in this group" (Jade, 711_0020, 00.35-01.04).

As well as family issues causing stress for young people, there were also indications that pressures at school were contributing to teenager anxiety:

> "You [speaking to another group member] were saying about [young] people being forced into this model of 'you won't, you know, you're never going to get a job'; expectation is incredibly low, when the expectations are unattainably high and they're

> leaving the feeling of disappointment and not living up to what my teachers want me to do or my parents want me to do, that can be just as gutting for them as an individual, and it's, it's trying, yea, (to) force them into a model" (Jason, 711_0014, 23.00-23.25).

The contrast evoked between the differing levels of expectations, which, were, on the one hand 'unattainably high' and on the other, 'incredibly low' creates a sense of the yawning gap between the different realities. The speaker uses a violent term of "gutting" to explain the potential impact of this situation on the young person.

Some of the ways in which social media was being used were also be a source of concern:

> "Yea, Facebook - not a week goes by when I don't have a young person who has had some kind of an issue on Facebook, whether or not it's a bullying issue, you know somebody's not speaking to somebody – all those things that aren't new, you know; they're, they're not new about young people falling out and changing friendship groups but now it's public you know and now if, if this little group decides to ostracise a person from their group for one reason or another, the whole school knows about it, you know, so the impact of that I think can't be under estimated; I think it's massive and I think it's changed the way young people view what a relationship is" (Jessica, 711_0047,10.59-11.38).

Another worry about young people becoming 'socially-isolated' because "it's a lot easier to sit in your bedroom behind a laptop isn't it" (Jessica, 711_0047, 12.31-34) and in some cases being "bombarded" with sexualised images on the Internet (Ben, 711_0042), suggests that the workers are picking up on issues affecting young people that are being overlooked elsewhere. The data included exhortations to pay attention to young people who are "just getting completely ignored, for whatever reason *they* are not seeing things" (Sophie, 711_0013, 09.11-16) where the '*they'* appears to refer to those in positions of power who are not listening to young people.

Noticeably, young people's increasing reliance on social media (and some of its ensuing difficulties as discussed above) was taking place at the same time as the widespread reduction in youth provision, when supportive enabling relationships appeared to be needed more than ever. The remaining workers were well aware of the pressure on them to offer flexible and timely responses to young people who were raising such diverse issues.

<u>YWID3B: 'Building relationships with young people and in the community'</u>

To be able to 'lead' as well as 'serve', relied heavily on the quality of relationships that the worker established with young people, with colleagues and in the wider community. Across the data, building relationships was described in terms of "youth work at its core" (Andy,

711_0031) and “the relationships are the key though it is the individual one-on-one with a young person, which really is the reward” (Jason, 711_0015, 12.47-12.51).

> “That’s what youth workers do - like you say - you build that relationship; that’s the sort of thing that you can help develop because you have got their trust and because they have respect for you really” (Katherine, 711_0022, 12.24-12.36).

The data shows that relationship-building and listening to young people were highly-prized youth work activities. Moreover, given this commitment to “celebrating relational work”, there is apparent frustration with managerial discourses that are:

> “Squeezing the amount of relational work that can be done so that you get literally the number of youth workers being cut and you also cut the amount of time that they can spend doing relational work” (Jason, 711_0014, 22.41-22.54).

On the one hand, the workers were still committed to investing time in their relationships with young people, but on the other, they were feeling increasingly constrained by quantitative methods of determining service value (see discussion in YWID5C-D). Despite these managerial pressures on their working week, youth workers were often seeking out new ways to make themselves known to local young people, to build and sustain those relationships:

> “Our funders wouldn’t necessarily have said within that work they wanted us to do any schools’ work but what we’re saying is, well, if we do the schools work that’ll give us continuity with young people; they’ll see the same staff on a regular basis over twelve months so whilst we’re not in their ward, we’ll still be seeing those young people” (Andy, 711_0033, 21.57-22.15).

Similarly, time was spent on building relationships with well-placed individuals who could facilitate access to young people in schools, in youth offending teams and elsewhere:

> “[Youth workers] always want to make friends with the reception staff, the gatekeepers to the school” (Jason, 711_0014, 08.00-08.02).

It was a form of networking that not only raised the profile of youth work but paved the way to reach out to hard-to-engage young people. One such example of networking was a youth worker making a presentation to local police officers:

> “They were very much interested in, you know, working with the young people that they work with in custody. What opportunities were there? There is nothing around for young people so I was, you know, trying to promote; they could promote us within the custody suite so there’s young people coming into custody suites and then they are given our information and they could come to us” (Victoria, 711_0039, 02.15-02.43).

Consequently, knowing about, and being known, in your community was helping the youth workers to fulfil their role and also carried echoes of the 'The Fairbairn-Milson Report' (DES, 1969) mentioned earlier, that emphasised the community role of youth workers:

> "I think talking about the roles we've got it's not just the youth worker, you are a community worker as well; if you are not, certainly running a youth club like mine if you're not out there in the community and people don't know you, then you are going to have a really hard job to try and give young people the best that you can, so that is what I try and do" (Philip, 711_0020, 05.31-05.51).

The significance of relationship work was just one strand of the data generated by both focus group discussions of youth work roles, relationships and activities (Q2, appendix 6). Through their relationships, youth workers were able to practise as social and informal educators and it is to their ideas about 'informal education' that the discussion turns next.

YWID3C: 'Being an informal educator'

'Informal education' is a term well-represented in the professional literature (Jeffs and Smith, 1996; Richardson and Wolfe, 2001; also see earlier definition in 2.1) and was a recurring theme in the research data. The participants appeared committed to informal and social education based on young people's voluntary participation in spontaneous learning situations as they arose:

> "What I think is a constant, consistent role in youth work is an informal educator, and I think that is the one bit for me that has never changed" (Katherine, 711_0020, 14.34-14.42).

Informal education was seen as a way to facilitate learning from experiences and was rooted in an inquiring disposition that could open up new ways of thinking and acting in situations:

> "When something happens, as informal educators we're like, 'Why, why did that happen?' and I think we ask that question why and that takes us onto three other questions and further reflection and analysis" (Ben, 711_0043, 05.50-06.14).

Reflecting on what worked well could help embed the new learning:

> "It's kind of like at the end, you say 'Well, you know what, you have learnt this, this and this'. 'Have I?' 'Yea, you didn't think that did you?', so I like, I like that sort of idea of like you get them to learn without having to, without having any money" (Peter, 711_0021, 05.15-05.33).

Being curious and inquiring more deeply into issues that mattered involved practical reasoning and so was quite different from paternalistic, formal education systems that could be perceived as depositing information in people (known as “the banking concept of education”, Freire, 1996, 53). As such, fostering this approach was seen as beneficial for both the young person and the youth worker and was a skill that could provide a stimulus in more formal education settings as well as in practice settings used by participants.

YWID3D: ‘Youth work skills in practice’

The data shows participants were using a plethora of skills in wide-ranging practice settings that included school drop-in facilities, health-based youth projects or arts and dance-based youth work. They were also managing youth centres, organising residentials and carrying out detached or outreach youth work in a parish or neighbourhood. Some workers referred to particular expertise in the arts, health education or sports coaching, which, along with more generic communication and organisational skills, were seen as useful strategies to build relationships with young people and promote informal education. Emphasis was placed on personal attributes underpinning the skills set, with the need for “flexibility, creativity and professionalism” (Jessica, 711_0050) in order to engage with the diverse situations they encountered. There were examples of worker resilience and making conscious use of themselves to deal with some of the difficult situations that could arise:

> “You are in the thick of it and you have to take a bit of, a bit of crap now and again; you’ve got to be quite thick-skinned haven’t you, broad shoulders…I think you are constantly modifying your own sort of approach and there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach because people are different aren’t they?” (Ben, 711_0041, 01.42-02.25).

Being adaptable and able to make the most of the situation appeared to be an accepted aspect of practice. Its usual starting point was to pay attention to young people’s concerns to understand their latent meanings and potential ramifications. In due course, this might often lead into offering individual support or working with a group on a project. Moreover, these work practices were underpinned by substantial subject-specific skills of professional youth work that are recognised in the community of practice and endorsed in the literature (QAA, 2009, 20; National Youth Agency, 2014a).

YWID3E: ‘Facilitating project and group work processes’

Several references were made to the facilitation of projects and group work:

> “Especially working and looking at different projects; different groups you know and the speed now that projects are coming in at you and you are having to shelve one set of skills and then you have got another different group that have got a total different

> set of issues and … so you know there is a lot of work on yourself on how you can adapt yourself and your personality to what they may need" (Helen, 711_0014, 08.47-09.11).

Facilitating a group was recognised as a skilful area of work. It was about more than just doing something in a group, it was about working *with* groups, a distinction emphasised by Mark Smith (2008) in his review of trends in group work across the sector. It involved staying tuned in to individual needs and group work processes:

> "You sort of have to think-in-action and adapt to their style of learning" (Peter, 711_0020, 04.39-04.58).

As such, group work was recognised as a valuable part of youth work, being perceived as "creative" and "very beneficial for the young people" (Victoria, 711_0037, 14.51-15.01). The data suggests these workers had a good working knowledge of the mechanics of such processes and a capacity to improvise in response to group dynamics.

YWID3F: 'Listening, advocacy, mentoring and range of one-to-one work'

There was a similar level of commitment to work with individuals, where skilful listening was central to the youth worker's craft and "one great conversation is enough to spur you on" (Scott, 711_0015, 11.56-11.59).

> "The core of it is that whole just listening to young people and giving them space and time that other adults in their lives don't give them" (Andy, 711_0020, 04.09-04.17).

Jeffs and Smith (1996, 15-24) argue that 'trusting in conversation' shows interest in and respect for the other person, and brings the possibilities of increasing understanding and mutual learning through social interaction. By 'trusting in conversation', the youth workers were often helping young people to think through their options and providing support that helped them move forward. At times, different staff members appeared to listen in ways that replicated generational family roles:

> "Sometimes age comes into play with it… [with] young volunteers and the young people kind of treat them like a kind of older brother or sister, and then other volunteers, they will treat more as a parental figure… and the way that they approach the younger one might be very different to the older one but they are still looking for support and advice" (Jason, 711_0014, 02.54-03.32).

There were several examples of advocating on behalf of young people and being positioned:

> "Somewhere in between the young person and you know, whoever the other side is…just being that person that can maybe relate a little bit to both when they seem to be completely on different pages and not actually that far away in some cases" (Ed, 711_0014, 04.28-05.02).

In some cases, "having to stand up for young people" (Alistair, 711_0020, 04.52-53) involved a struggle, "forever kind of trying to fight for something whether it is a bit of money or space or time or resources"" (Alistair, 711_0020, 04.36-04.45).

Workers spoke of providing support for young people who may be in crisis because of bereavement or trauma: "to kind of catch it when things are falling apart" (Jason, 711_0014, 10.51-53) and to be there "when young people fall through the gap in the net" (Andy, 711_0032, 03.10-13). The accounts of practice suggest that youth workers kept their focus on young people's wellbeing as they went about their work. One particular incident described to me in terms of 'saving lives' put this outlook into sharp relief. The previous week, two detached youth workers were walking down the street on a cold and wet evening and noticed a young woman sitting at a bus stop, apparently waiting for a bus. They walked on but decided to double back to check the young woman was all right. When they returned, they found she'd fallen on the ground:

> "She'd been drinking but she was going into a sleep, a long sleep and she was absolutely freezing; she was wearing a really short skirt and hardly any clothes on so they managed to get her (upright); the ambulance came and took her but if they'd walked on and it was in quite a secluded area, she wouldn't have been found until maybe it was too late… It's what we do … we care about other people, it's a very caring profession and it's not recognised" (Nicola, 711_0056, 2.49-03.52).

This incident, encrypted as 'saving lives' by the worker, appeared to illustrate the point made by Jason and Andy above, that youth workers were alert to young people in crisis who might otherwise be 'slipping through the net'. Their professional judgment of the situation and subsequent actions made a significant difference to this young person. Knowing the young woman was now in safe hands, the workers wrote up this event on their 'incident reporting form' and continued with their work for the evening.

<u>YWID3G: 'Managing administration'</u>

The above example from practice that required an 'incident report' was just one of many administrative tasks that were now occupying workers' time:

> "I know I spend more time in the office than I do with young people, quite a lot of the time. I've got to force myself to think 'no'; no matter how many deadlines are coming

> out (of) your ears, that you know, you still need to spend time with young people, but it is more time in the office at the minute - it is just horrific isn't it?" (Sophie, 711_0014, 23.27-23.44).

These bureaucratic tasks appeared to have expanded exponentially in line with the onset of managerialism in public services that required more forms of evidence to justify service funding. The findings in this study suggest that the prevalence of the accountability discourse was taking precedence over the actual work itself:

> "The time that you are spending on admin rather than, because to me I think the value for money bit is the work with young people" (Katherine, 711_0022, 17.55-18.02).

Nevertheless, it appeared that administrative duties were just one of many activities that a youth worker might undertake and these are duly considered below.

YWID3H: 'The diversity of work roles'

The participants were conscious of sometimes being seen as a "jack of all trades" (Ed, 711_0012) because of the multiplicity of roles they might perform in the working week:

> "I've always marvelled at the fact that as a youth worker I do everything and every other job, profession I come into and I talk to people, they have always got somebody who does that bit of the job for them…I do everything from cleaning my own office to doing my budgets, manage my staff, manage my staff not for just their job that they do for me but the job that they do in their other job where they have got a really bad manager, and I have to manage that for them as well" (Andy, 711_0020, 09.47-10.25).

Here, the youth worker construct appeared sufficiently diffuse for it to transcend many occupational boundaries. This was endorsed by several workers as they described some of the more mundane tasks they might perform as part of their job, though perhaps such duties might have more to do with the limited infrastructure that was in place to support their role. Nevertheless, it appeared that several were supporting their part-time staff, not only for their youth work role but also in their lives outside youth work. Such accounts imply both a generous image of helpful youth workers but also a lack of resourcing to help with cleaning or managing the budget. More than one other worker chimed in with similar experiences:

> "And you do the great quality youth work and you do the cleaning and all that and then you have got to do the admin and the reports" (Alistair, 711_0022, 17.10-17.17)

Managing the range of work involved multi-tasking and flexibility but its diverse nature was also portrayed as an enjoyable feature of the job. As another worker explained:

> “That struck me the other day when I was in a local providers’ meeting in the morning with councillors and police sergeants and housing association reps and all this kind of stuff. I spent all the morning discussing strategy, strategic planning for delivery and provision across the Parish and ward and everything and then I spent the afternoon paper mâchéing balloons and I was like, I love this job” (Carl, 711_0020, 11.07- 11.30).

Conclusion

‘Loving this job’ is an enthusiastic note on which to draw together the threads of this initial tranche of data. This chapter has presented the first set of major themes that emerged from participants’ immersion in the ‘world of youth work’. It offers several models of identity rooted in wide-ranging experiences with more than one identity being acknowledged in the sharing of personal and professional biographies. Often, their youth work identity was forged through a difficult adolescence, volunteering experience or modelled on significant mentors. These were identities that continued to diversify through experiences of being a learner in “continuous development of myself as a person” and their roles in fieldwork practice as listener, advocate, informal educator, group facilitator or administrator. There was a sense of conviction in not only being a youth worker but also of belonging to this community of practice. The data extracts reveal unreported and less visible accounts of professional youth work and by so doing, they may challenge some of the more reductive youth work stereotypes that persist in the public domain. In the next chapter, the second set of major themes will look into ways in which external influences begin to impinge on this sense of identity and practice.

Chapter 6 Thematic findings on youth workers' identities and sub-identities – part 2

This chapter builds on earlier themes in Chapter Five that described youth workers' professional commitment and passion for their work with young people. This was consolidated into a robust set of beliefs and codes of practice that had been internalised and continued to influence their everyday roles and fieldwork activities. Now, attention turns to charting the second set of overarching themes (YWID4 -YWID6, see extract of table 13 below) that at times disrupt this initial conception of youth work and contextualise it amidst the maelstrom of current practice. These categories are discussed in turn below, with additional descriptions and examples of supporting data provided in appendix 13.

Extract of Table 13: Overarching Themes YWID4 - YWID6		
	Overarching theme	**Brief description**
4	**'Moving from practice tensions to practice wisdom'**	Some misconceptions of youth work roles and processes have to be overcome to strengthen inter-agency collaboration
5	**'Changing times – diminishing funding and increasing managerialism'**	Funding shortfalls and managerial practices are contributing to professional dilemmas
6	**'Being professional youth workers - where to now?'**	Amid mixed reflections on the professional status of youth work, there are instances of ongoing commitment and legacy.

The discussion begins with the fourth overarching theme or category - 'Moving from practice tensions to practice wisdom' (YWID4) – in which youth workers voiced some commonly-held misconceptions of youth work. The workers believed these misleading ideas tended to detract from wider appreciation of their professional role and impede inter-agency communication. The situation appeared to improve when others witnessed examples of youth work professional expertise in dealing with young people's issues.

In the fifth category of themes - 'Changing Times: diminishing funding and increasing managerialism' (YWID5) – the focus shifts to considering workers' preoccupations with 'the battle for funding' and managerial discourses that were reshaping the delivery of many public services. The displacement of traditional practices to conform to a more market-driven model of service delivery in which 'targeting' and 'outcome measures' prevailed was interpreted as contributing to professional dilemmas.

Finally, the sixth category of themes – 'Being professional youth workers - where to now?' (YWID6) - takes stock of the professional implications of the overall discourse. The youth workers were conscious of the many challenges they faced. They were critical of poor practice in work with young people and keen to advocate on behalf of their profession and its traditions.

YWID4: ‘Moving from practice tensions to practice wisdom’

This fourth category of themes is constructed to show a progressive narrative (see table 17). It begins by acknowledging some of the limited ideas about youth work that left workers feeling frustrated and were inhibiting inter-agency collaboration. This is then countered by examples of more positive relationships, especially with schools, that were leading to innovative practice and bringing examples of youth work expertise into the public eye.

Table 17: YWID4 ‘Moving from practice tensions to practice wisdom’		
	Theme	**Data extracts**
A	Misconceptions of youth work practice	- ‘Woolly in terms of what people understand’, - ‘Even some management don’t understand completely’, - ‘I don’t think that we’re always that good at explaining what we do’.
B	Uneasy relationships with other agencies	- ‘A gamble whether you are going to benefit from this’, - ‘Just youth workers’, - ‘I think you can be professional without being a suit’.
C	Tensions between police and youth work roles	- ‘How inappropriate it was for the police to be talking to young people like this’, - ‘I haven’t met one young person who respects the police’, - ‘Youth work training for police?’
D	School-based youth work: from teething troubles to acceptance as professional colleagues	- ‘Building trust with teachers’, - ‘We’re not the person that you send your badly behaved young people to, you know’, - ‘Doing formal lesson plans for teachers that can be Ofsted inspected’.
E	Practice wisdom – what works in practice	- ‘Trusting in your relationship with young people’, - ‘Organic’ youth work, - ‘It’s about being honest and being truthful’.

YWID4A: ‘Misconceptions of youth work practice’

It was evident that continuing public misconceptions of youth work were disheartening for the youth workers and left them feeling under-valued. The difficulties of defining youth work have long been promulgated. It appears that previously valued attributes of a flexible and malleable service in which workers ‘go with the flow’ have contributed to ideas of “this imprecise practice” (Bradford and Cullen, 2014, 94), which, inadvertently, has diminished wider appreciation of its underpinning skills base. The research participants were fully aware of this problem and alert to stereotypical views that prevailed:

> “Yea, like I said before when the ten thousandth person says to you, all you’re doing is talking over pool tables and stuff…” (Alistair, 711_0022, 20.26-33).

> "If you're not in youth work, it's always been quite woolly in terms of what people understand a youth worker is: somebody playing table tennis or pool, sort of talking to young people and getting on the terms of being all sort of pally and all that; that's the sort of stereotypical sort of lay person's approach to understanding of what youth work is" (Greg, 711_0028, 03.38-59).

As workers spoke up to dispel some of these blinkered notions of youth work, they found their explanations appeared to provoke the response that the work was not so specialised and something anyone could do. A not untypical reaction was reported as:

> "'Oh, I can do that', or 'that would work in my school', 'that would work in my job', and I think that maybe that's one of the difficulties why it is so difficult to define youth work is that people aren't readily willing to try and accept it or try and understand the vision of what youth work is" (Scott, 711_0015, 22.42-23.01).

These findings, coupled with such queries as "'do you get paid for your job'" (Sophie, 711_0015, 06.37), chime with the general lack of awareness of youth work as a job that some workers acknowledged in describing their own accidental entry into this career pathway (YWID1A). At the local level too, there were concerns that those managing youth work did not always hold the same vision:

> "But even in a youth service, mine is a specific youth club, but even some members of the management, don't understand completely what youth work is; parents of the centre or they're local councillors or whatever; they're doing it to help keep the club open, but they don't actually understand" (Philip, 711_0021, 10.40-55).

The findings suggest that misapprehensions increase when youth workers are line-managed by staff from other disciplines who are unfamiliar with youth work processes. The workers argued that factors such as "when their bosses aren't youth workers" or "when policy is set in the London office" contribute to professional tensions and test the professional ethos forged by their training and fieldwork experiences in the sector.

YWID4B: 'Uneasy relationships with other agencies'

Further difficulties appeared to arise when youth workers stepped into other professional arenas to work collaboratively in the interests of young people. These inter-agency relationships were often sites of mixed expectations and miscommunication, which arose in part from different practice traditions but also might be attributed to the contemporaneous state of flux in many social welfare agencies as service reviews, restructuring and redundancies took their toll (see, for example, Pemberton, 2013; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2015). Some

inter-professional tensions were associated with low expectations of the quality of service that was on offer:

> "There is like huge trust issues, I think probably on both sides, as we were saying, like social workers; we don't trust that we are going to get a good social worker and they don't necessarily trust the work that we are doing either" (Ed, 711_0015, 07.30-07.45).

At times, the lack of response from Social Services created problems for the youth worker who, because of their regular contact with the young person, was left feeling frustrated for the young person and by the limited recognition of their own professional role:

> "When we try and refer or contact social workers I can be ringing five, six times a day for three weeks without answer…and they're saying, I'll get back to you or she's just on lunch... We see these young people every day and, or every night in some cases and their social case workers see them once every six weeks and we're picking up whatever is rolling in and yet because we are 'just' youth workers, and I do think, I don't know whether it is the title, the name, what it stands, I don't know, but you are 'just youth workers'" (Helen, 711_0015, 05.53-06.35).

This experience of youth workers being ignored or left out of the loop when information was being shared was not uncommon:

> "It's quite often we are left out and we're the ones who have got the real hands-on stuff and evidence of how they are behaving and what we have seen plus, as well with that, local people working local in the area" (Ben, 711_0044, 04.41-53).

These points of view imply limited inter-agency commitment to forging new relationships in order to deliver 'joined up' multi-agency work. Moreover, the remarks also attest to themes discussed earlier (YWID3F), namely that youth workers are often trying to support young people by advocating on their behalf with other services or groups in the community.

<u>YWID4C: 'Tensions between police and youth work roles'</u>

Local community initiatives involving both police officers and youth workers were often beset with practice tensions. This became apparent in one inter-agency case study where different ideas about priorities and practices came quickly to the surface:

> "We were doing that developmental work with the young people and we had them on side quite quickly but the police, when we were there, what the police wanted us to do and the other agencies wanted us to do was a little bit different than what we were actually going to do" (Greg, 711_0026, 13.26-13.42).

As the situation unfolded, the youth workers found themselves struggling to maintain their footing in the practice situation. On the one hand, workers were trying to build rapport with young people and "get them on side" by treading cautiously so they did not lose young people's trust and be seen as "grasses for the police". On the other hand, despite earlier joint planning meetings with the police to agree the approach, the police began to intervene to tackle anti-social behaviour in a short timeframe. As Greg explained:

> "It wasn't quick enough for the police and the police came out and started undermining what we were doing and sort of like, we were talking to the groups and they were coming out and grabbing young people and saying 'OK' and giving them silly tickets you know like 'Stop and Search' tickets and stuff like that and I said 'what's going on, what's all that about?'… They started behaving as bad as the young people to sort of enforce, you know what I mean" (Greg, 711_0026, 14.12-14.38).

The alienating impact of heavy-handed policing by 'Stop and Search' tactics on young people has been reported previously (see Smith, 2011; Strickland, 2014[5]) while innovative ideas of police training developed through 'The Policing Dialogues' appear to offer ways to improve the situation (see 4.7). Further training for police officers was endorsed in the present research too:

> "I think police officers should have some youth work training, because I haven't met one young person who respects the police and I do think young people should respect the police, but you know if young people are going to be harassed walking down the street and spoken to like that then they are not going to build up that respect" (Victoria, 711_0038, 15.51- 16.08).

Closer scrutiny of this extended case study could extricate differing opinions about the place of young people in society and competing professional discourses that follow in their wake. It could also increase awareness of the quality of communication that needs to exist between partners at different tiers of a shared enterprise and thus begin to unpick the use of power. As police officers and youth workers are positioned differently, ultimately the police rely on the law to legitimise their actions while youth workers rely on the currency of their relationship with young people. It therefore appears inevitable that the police may expect youth workers to do more policing of young people while youth workers may expect police officers to "incorporate

[5] 'Yet, sadly, the police's trust and credibility among young people in areas affected remains close to zero. We hear reports from calm, reasonable youth workers who feel that Stop and Search is conducted in an unnecessarily demeaning manner and not necessarily intelligence led.' London Youth Submission to the Panel (Strickland, 2014, 17) www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/sn03878.pdf

quite a lot of youth work within their role in dealing with young people" (Carl 711_0020, 11.54-57) and on such grounds may judge the quality of each other's service provision.

YWID4D: 'School-based youth work: from teething troubles to acceptance as professional colleagues'

The restructuring of youth provision was leading many youth workers into more school-based youth work. However, youth workers often knew of young people's struggles at school and so retained some misgivings over school systems and priorities. For their part, teachers were often unsure of the youth worker's role in school and so time was needed to overcome mutual wariness and establish trust:

> "I think you have got to build their trust up in the school, I think with all the teachers and that's the hardest bit than the young people to be honest (Sophie, 711_0014, 07.46-55).

Sometimes being accepted also involved adopting a different dress code to suit the setting:

> "That is why I am wearing a tie. It's easier to make relationships with young people even with a tie than it would be for a teacher without a tie, cos they are like, you are not wearing a tie, so you're obviously a slob, then you wouldn't be working professionally, then ok, I will put a tie on then" (Ed, 711_0014, 08.03-08.19).

Once they became accepted in schools, youth workers were often able to make a positive contribution to school life. The data portrayed youth workers providing school-based drop-in facilities that could lead to supporting young people who were struggling:

> "Sometimes you are that person, that's just that bridge for that little gap between her and the teachers" (Sophie, 711_0015, 01.44-51).

They were also delivering lessons on 'Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education' as part of the National Curriculum, and particularly health and sex education classes:

> "That particular issue of sexual health is so important I want to do something with and it is me not kind of having to step out of the youth work zone. I have to go into schools and do formal lesson plans for the teachers so that they can be Ofsted inspected on it and it is kind of outside what I originally trained to do but it is worth it for the end result" (Jason, 711_0013, 10.26-44).

Although the youth work contribution to school life appeared to be receiving more recognition, this was not always found to be the case. One such example involved a youth work initiative with local sports co-ordinators to develop dance for young men in schools. Here, the school

appeared to have little idea of the amount of youth work that had gone into organising and delivering this successful project, which had also secured access to funding streams that benefitted work with young men in the district. As a consequence, despite the success of the project, the worker was left feeling undervalued (Helen, 711_0015).

The trend towards more overlap between formal and informal education is a topical issue - (see, for example, the National Youth Agency Commission into the role of youth work in formal education, NYA, 2013). To youth workers, the benefits of youth work approaches in the class room are obvious: to teachers and others accustomed to formal education systems, it appears more of a slow awakening to its virtues:

> "I think once we can actually demonstrate what we do and I think that whole thing about the way we present ourselves in school and about being reliable, I think that all that's gone in our favour and in general I do, I've found that schools have been very supportive about having youth workers in school" (Jessica 711_0049, 04.02-04.24).

Despite teething troubles, these findings suggest that youth work in schools has begun to prosper and has led to the forging of new alliances and interchange of practice.

YWID4E: 'Practice wisdom - what works in practice'

Youth work that works well involves the use of professional expertise or the "art and science" (Samson, 2015, 119) of professional interactions. This useful analogy of 'art and science' can be applied to youth work accounts in this study, where youth workers showed 'artistry' in their creative responses to situations and built their practice on the 'science' of their profession, on its epistemology of principles, values and practices.

Reflective practice is often aligned with professional expertise and practice wisdom. Reflecting in and on practice provides a framework to consider the "patterns and commonalities" (Powell, 2008, 101) of situations, and can lead into more nuanced practice and beneficial outcomes. Elucidating some of these facets of 'practice wisdom' - where workers place trust in their relationship with young people and pace the work so it sits alongside the individual stage of development - may have wider benefits too, in making visible the professional skills and raising its value in other professional arenas. Additionally, the ability to clarify expectations, sustain boundaries and roles under pressure can demonstrate good practice. Several of these traits appear in the data example below (table 18), with two further examples of 'Practice Wisdom' (YWID4E) included in appendix 13.

	Table 18: YWID4E Practice Wisdom Example: 'Going out on a limb'
1	"I noticed this one young person who had done really well, and he'd, I didn't know him massively well but I had kind of like started building a relationship with him and I was told not to take him to Alton Towers because he'd abscond, so but because of what he'd achieved with me I kind of think he deserved it, so I had to explain to all my managers why I thought he was, I should be able to take him and that he had already been punished for what he had done as well, that was another thing that I kind of like was fighting against, because it's like doubly punishing him for something that he had done, so anyway I sat down with him and went through some ground rules with him, quite simple ones, you know, let him have a bit of an input into it, and he behaved perfectly on the day, didn't run away, thank god, and everyone afterwards was like 'oh, okay, you were right on that.'"
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
	Source: Sophie, 711_0015, 13.30-14.26

In this data extract, the youth worker's relationship with the young person is crucial to the success of the interaction. Sophie wants to reward the young man fairly for his efforts, "because of what he'd achieved with me I kind of think he deserved it" (lines 3-4) and puts her belief in natural justice into practice, to avoid "doubly punishing him" (line 7). She appears to be making a moral judgment here about the right thing to do and this is in fact upheld, for the young man is allowed to go on the trip.

The need for workers to advocate on behalf of young people with more risk-averse managers (lines 4-5) is not uncommon. By doing so here, the worker is trusting in the potential of the young person, giving him a second chance and has not given up on him although others may have. Moreover, this is not undertaken in a vacuum, for Sophie spends time with the young man before the trip: "I sat down with him and went through some ground rules with him, quite simple ones, you know" (lines 8-9) thereby clarifying acceptable behaviours and potential consequences. Sophie treats the young man with respect, she "let him have a bit of an input into it" (line 9) rather than imposing rules on him. By her actions, Sophie has shown that she accepts the young man where he is now and is not holding previous misdemeanours against him. Trusting in young people and weighing up the risk is not uncommon and often causes the worker stress in case it goes wrong. Here the relief of the worker is evident in her remarks, "didn't run away, thank god" (line 10). Moreover, in the brief acknowledgement by management, "oh, okay, you were right on that" (line 11), there appears to be approbation of her professional judgement in this situation.

YWID5: ‘Changing times - diminishing funding and increasing managerialism’

This next thematic category, ‘Changing Times’, focuses on the substantial shifts in professional discourses arising from depleted sources of funding, pervasive organisational restructuring and burgeoning managerialism that were augmenting professional uncertainty and changes in the work place (see table 19 below).

Table 19: YWID5 ‘Changing times – diminishing funding and increasing managerialism’

	Theme	**Data extracts**
A	Cuts to service provision – loss of staff and projects	- ‘Cuts and austerity measures, a vast impact on everything and the morale of everyone as well’, - ‘Constantly defending the service’, - ‘A lot of uncertainty about whether there will be a youth service as such’.
B	The constant battle over funding	- ‘Slipping ever so slightly into the next funding bracket’, - ‘Not knowing whether you’ve got a budget’, - ‘I think money constraints are against us’.
C	The impact of targeting	- ‘Targets, targets…we have to hit so many’, - ‘Ignoring some young people’? - ‘The unfinished piece of work’.
D	Distance travelled – the focus on outcome measures	- ‘Trying to hit some kind of marker’, - ‘It is far too numbers focused’, - ‘An age-old thing, how to evaluate what we do’.
E	Professional dilemmas	- ‘Organisations that chase funding and they make it look on paper as if they’re doing a fantastic job’, - ‘Should we sacrifice our ethics and sort of morals to get the job done and be recognised for it?’ - ‘It is not just about the service; it is also about the protection of the vulnerable’.

YWID5A: ‘Cuts to service provision – loss of staff and projects’

The sifting of workers’ stories of practice revealed the huge impact of funding cuts on youth projects, staffing provision and staff morale. Public funding of youth services had fluctuated in the past but it was the onset of recession in 2008 followed by the severe impact of austerity measures on the sector that precipitated the grievous loss of generic youth work funding. In 2013, at the time of this data collection, cuts and service restructuring were ongoing:

> “The fact that there’s huge budget cuts are a big reality for us; you know we’re trying to do the best we can, with a lot of our services have got fewer staff; there’s been huge restructuring and that’s still ongoing, that’s going to happen again so that’s been difficult” (Jessica, 711_0047, 14.46-15.03).

These findings of 'huge budget cuts' are substantiated by Unison (2014) who, through a Freedom of Information request in late 2013, uncovered the enormity of cutbacks to UK local authority youth service budgets between 2012 and 2014. This included the loss of more than 2000 youth work posts, the closure of 350 youth centres and the loss of 35,000 hours of outreach youth work. In fact, Unison estimated that £259 million had been lost to local authority youth service budgets between 2010 and 2014 (Unison, 2014, 5). The North West region, the site of the present research, was particularly blighted as deprivation-related government grants were cut (Butler and Carter, 2011; Fitzpatrick and Ansari, 2014).

For many workers, the sequence of events was comparable to military action in which youth work was under attack, and where "it's almost like you are constantly defending the service" (Jason, 711_0014, 23.52- 55). It was taking a toll on morale with anxieties over "whether there will be a youth service as such" (Ben, 711_0042, 07.01-03). Moreover, there would be casualties, not only with the loss of staff but also in the provision for a vulnerable client group:

> "There's a lot of young people out there who need support especially with everything being cut now; cuts, cuts, cuts, all the time; more pressures on young people" (Victoria, 711_0037, 09.01-09).

Youth workers found themselves having to "battle on through all the dramas" (Jade, 711_0020, 03.22-03.24) and amongst those defending their service it appeared to evoke a sense of war-time camaraderie: "it's that sort of blitz spirit almost, isn't it; if you have got nothing, everyone pulls together" (Carl, 711_0021, 07.47-49). The rhetoric of the battlefield reflects typical language in use in the press and public life, capturing a divisive world view of 'us' and 'them' that appeared to be borne out by contemporary events with the divisive 'bedroom tax' becoming law in April 2013 and continuing evidence of childhood poverty and inequality (Doward and Burke, 2013).

Making sense of these 'dramas' has preoccupied youth workers for some time. If youth work has lost its way because of "systemic failing within youth work to be able to say, this is what we do, this is how we do it and this is why it is good" (Andy, 711_0022, 07.51-58), then a more evidence-based form of practice suited to these times would be required. However, if instead the discourse is interpreted as ideologically motivated by neo-liberals to reduce public funding of services and increase the private sector stake in service delivery, then generic youth work has become a casualty of the political fray. Moreover, the ability to monitor the continuing crisis in youth work funding has been further diminished by changes in the Department for Education reporting structure for local authorities that no longer puts youth work in a separate category (NCVYS, 2013). Given their plight, the youth workers were increasingly caught up in efforts to sustain funding for their existing youth provision.

YWID5B: ‘The constant battle over funding’

There were many accounts of funding difficulties at every level of youth work. Some projects struggled to meet annual running costs when there were slight shifts in local socio-economic indices of deprivation that meant they were no longer eligible for funding. Other services had been withdrawn from particular post code districts that were deemed affluent despite evidence of needy families in the area. It was also apparent that funding dilemmas were instrumental in community groups becoming more competitive and territorial over their funding sources. With budget uncertainties, youth projects were struggling to manage their finances and plan ahead:

> “It is the budget, not knowing whether you have got a budget, and if you have got a budget how much is your budget going to be; it’s still not knowing if you have got petty cash or what income is coming in” (Jade, 711_0021, 00.20-30).

For these youth workers, investing in youth work was about investing in young people and moreover, it had the potential to save money in the future:

> “I don’t think the government realise how much money youth work could potentially save them. Like with many different types of young people, it’s all going to be different; … so if we start with those that are maybe on the risk of exclusion, OK, so if they get involved in vandalism, that’s money to clear that up and you have a court case that’s money, someone in jail that is more money, and so on” (Ed, 711_0016, 07.40-08.08).

In contrast to their dismal financial circumstances, some workers pointed out the lack of money could be taken as “a challenge and an opportunity”, a time to be more entrepreneurial and provocative with conversations about decision-making processes and resourcing of youth provision that would “bring political education back into youth work” (Andy, 711_0021, 07.50-53). It appeared that withdrawal of the executive’s commitment to universal youth provision left those positioned on the periphery to make the best of the situation and improvise because, “you know everybody has worked out how to get stuff” (Ben, 711_0045, 07.58-08.01). In some respects, it had recharged the activist credentials of youth workers as agents of change, for it was argued “you’re always stood on the outside of that ordinary thinking or the challenges that people are saying you can’t do it that way, and we’re trying to find a way around how we can” (Helen, 711_0015, 23.37-23.47). These improvisational forms of practice appeared to be slipping into the cracks left between managerial preoccupations with targeted youth work and the onset of standardised outcome measures.

YWID5C: ‘The impact of targeting’

Youth work was going through a sea-change that not only derived from funding shortfalls but also had much to with its submersion into management systems of targeting and outcome

measures to judge performance. The aim of 'targeted youth work' was to deliver short-term pieces of work to specific groups of young people in areas often designated as 'hot spots'. This way of working curtailed the more generous open-ended responsive practice and troubled these youth workers for it appeared to involve ignoring some young people by "taking away that support that I think should be there for all young people" (Katherine, 711_0020, 13.24-28). Moreover, it was argued that targeting a brief intervention at one group in an area and then having to move on was not helpful:

> "So what happens to that group that you have just done that work with, which yea, you have probably done some great work with, you can see a change, but it's not finished there is it?" (Katherine, 711_0022, 02.27-36).

The workers expressed frustration over leaving their work 'unfinished' and instead being drawn into the discourse that perceived certain young people as 'problems'. This targeting and negative labelling of some young people appeared to reinforce certain stereotypes, and moreover, it was unlikely that short-term solutions for more needy young people would be the answer to long-standing issues.

<u>YWID5D: 'Distance travelled – the focus on outcome measures'</u>

Youth workers were feeling the pressure of the shift towards targeting and formal outcome measures in their practice:

> "I've got to hit these targets, so I've got to get so many young people accredited so in-and-out of something but I'm also being told as an outreach worker, be on the streets and target the hot spot areas" (Nicola, 711_0052, 24.11- 24.30).

In addition, there were increasing demands for statistics to measure work output:

> "They're always asking how many of you have done a new activity; how many have been accredited on a course and they, they want to measure everything by a formalised standard" (Jason, 711_0014, 17.31-18.25).

This imposition of quantitative measures onto a qualitative service poses dilemmas for workers trying to find their professional pathway through this mêlée. The accreditation pushes youth workers towards more prescriptive activities with young people rather than the value-based relationship-building. In fact the preoccupation with numbers can often detract from the relational work in hand:

> "I am focusing on what's my next outcome, what's my next outcome, and you feel the difference at the end of the session, in terms of how connected you were" (Andy, 711_0022, 19.17-19.24).

Accreditation has come to dominate a range of public services. For some organisations, it appears to offer an easy way to calculate the benefits of a service to its client group and thereby show worth in wider arenas. For others, particularly in the 'social professions', determining service value is a more complex and diffuse process and often this cannot be neatly dovetailed into one prescribed model of evaluation.

Evaluating their practice is not new to youth workers. Typically, workers produce written sessional recordings to help them reflect on and develop their practice. They also produce written reports to inform managers and funders of work plans and outcomes, making connections with specific criteria such as 'Every Child Matters' (HM Treasury, 2003) in the past or, in the present climate, using the 'Youth Star' or 'Outcomes Star'[6] to record progress in their youth work interventions. The Youth Star measure involves speaking to a young person or group and agreeing a position on the scale of one to five on a category (such as 'Hopes and Dreams'), recording it at the beginning and end of an intervention. The idea was this record of 'distance travelled' could demonstrate an improvement in youth self-esteem or well-being attributable to their interaction with youth workers. These workers were conscious of potential misuse of the measure, both at first point of contact and in timing the second measure to show progress. One outreach worker could foresee problems arising on the street by asking such personal questions on first contact:

> "To do that at the beginning, it would just be crazy because young people wouldn't want to talk to us again; 'they are the crazy people who want to ask me questions that I don't want to answer'" (Andy, 711_0023, 14.33-14.39).

But then, doing it retrospectively, appears to reduce the validity of the measure.

Workers pointed out that because of the voluntary youth work relationship in which young people come and go, it is unrealistic to expect all young people to be willing to do the Outcome Star measure. The model appeared to work best when young people shared "social stories" (Jade, 711_0023) that built rapport and enabled the worker to glean information, identify needs and provide a supportive intervention. It was a conversation that could lead to mutually agreeing the young person's positioning on the one-to-five scale. One example of a worker's reflections on using the measure is included below in order to illustrate the depth of need that can emerge and how minimal signs of improvement might be seen as some form of progress:

> "In my area, it is all 'ones' [on the Youth Star], and for me it is really heart-breaking that they have not (sic) got no 'hopes or dreams'; they don't think that they can

[6] The Youth Star- the outcomes star for youth work, uses a scale of 1-5 to position the young person on the categories: Making a difference, Hopes and Dreams, Well-being, Education and Work, Communicating, Choices and Behaviours. http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/youth-star/

> ‘communicate’, their ‘well-being’ even their hygiene they know, it’s, it’s poor, so I would sit and do that. I have delivered it three times now, and not once has anybody ever started off on anything higher than ‘one’” (Jade, 711_0023, 10.14-10.31)

The question remains whether this form of measurement is suitable for the task in hand. Among the sample, there was considerable opposition to the over-reliance on targeting and outcome measures to determine youth work of value. Nevertheless, one interviewee did find some monitoring useful, arguing that:

> “the real youth work is the face to face youth work with the young people and monitoring their progression and looking at the outcomes…(that) show you a young people’s journey and barriers that, you know, they have overcome” (Victoria, 711_0037, 03.01-03.21).

Traditionally, however, youth workers have used qualitative case studies to capture the developmental changes that they observe in young people:

> “It is the changes in attitude when I see that a young person’s resilience has grown so that they can deal with whatever’s happening at home, at school, I value that …if I can see that that young person has developed, I, I know I have got value in my work. I feel sometimes it’s actually easier to sell youth work to individual donors than it is to statutory bodies, because individual donors will listen to the personal stories” (Jason, 711_0017, 07.35-08.13).

It was inescapable that some of the benefits of youth work might be discerned only at a much later date:

> “It’s an age-old thing isn’t it about how can we evaluate what we do. We can evaluate a session but we can’t evaluate the impact that’s going to have on a young person’s life because it might not; it might happen years down the line so that’s an age-old difficulty” (Jessica, 711_0047, 17.47-17.59).

Until then, the youth workers appear caught in an evaluating quandary. Youth workers who are investing time in compiling evidence that conforms to standardised ‘narratives of accountability’ may inadvertently be contributing to the side-lining of professional expertise (see earlier discussion in 2.5). Consequently, the data appears to call for a re-tuning of evaluation systems so they are more responsive to the needs and nuances of work practices with young people.

YWID5E: ‘Professional dilemmas’

The data shows workers often felt caught between differing sets of values that created some professional dilemmas. This was identified at an early stage in the research process (Pope, 2016a, see appendix 14) when workers in the pilot study shared ethical concerns over cuts to youth service funding. This professional disquiet did not diminish in the main body of the research either, where workers continued to debate how to survive in the new landscape. Some youth workers advocated pragmatism and conformity to managerial exigencies while others were showing signs of resistance behind the scenes:

> “Engaging with young people and building relationships, assessing needs and responding to that and doing what is right for the individual and not necessarily what the agency wants me to do” (Greg, 711_0026, 09.28-39).

This worker’s depiction of his priorities fits ideas of “principled infidelity” (Hoyle and Wallace, 2005, 210) that were mooted earlier (see 2.1).

Another difficult issue arose from service cuts that led to the loss of professional youth work expertise in the community thereby reducing the monitoring or support for local youth activities. The workers spoke of their frustration when projects were held up as examples of good practice despite questionable ethical underpinnings, while in other cases, unqualified project staff appeared to be “often playing catch up when it comes to things like health and safety, child protection” (Andy, 711_0031, 07.38-07.42). This apparent lack of attention to procedures that existed to safeguard the wellbeing of young people was a worry to youth workers, who were also stressed by the low value attributed to their own role in supporting local provision. The accumulative effect was to trigger some ‘soul-searching’ amongst youth workers about their place among the professions. This subject matter is the focus of the sixth thematic category (YWID6) where issues of professional standing and contribution are considered.

YWID6: Being professional youth workers - where to now?

This final thematic category considers the present status of youth workers in relation to national policy and acknowledges some of their meaningful contributions and professional legacy (see table 20 below).

Table 20: YWID6 'Being professional youth workers- where to now?'		
	Theme	**Data extracts**
A	Views on professional standing	- 'It is a halfway profession, isn't it', - 'Not a mature enough discipline', - 'Low down in the hierarchy of professionals'.
B	Gatekeeping the field	- 'It's more just like anyone thinks they can be a youth worker', - 'Anybody can rock up and call themselves a youth worker', - 'Preventing it being hijacked by other areas of work with young people'.
C	Views on national standing of youth work	- 'I kind of wish the 'Big Society' would be something that works', - 'Raise the profile of the work', - 'We need rebranding'.
D	Professional contribution and legacy	- 'The outcomes have been amazing, very small but not insignificant', - 'Building that team up so you know that it's not only reliant on you', - 'I look out for people to encourage them'.

YWID6A: 'Views on professional standing'

The research data suggests that the youth work profession fits into depictions of a "semi-profession" (Etzioni, 1969) situated in the lower echelons of the professional hierarchy that was discussed previously (see 2.1). The participants used terms such as "half-way profession" (Ed, 711_0015, 09.14) which implies an insecure footing in the professional domain and which was reinforced by events happening around them. As Local Authorities began to prioritise which public services to cut in the wake of reducing budgets, youth work was deemed a low priority, a discretionary rather than essential service. This was particularly apparent in the public revision of one local council's services in terms of 'critical, 'regulatory', 'frontline' or 'other services', and where youth work appeared in the lowly-placed 'other services' category (Butler, 2011).

Being situated on the side lines of 'essential' services was a source of frustration:

> "It's hard to swallow sometimes as well, when other professions have tried and then they go, oh, let's try the youth workers, they may be able to-, you know like we're the

last resort thing or -oh, an afterthought, 'Oh yea, we've got youth workers haven't we? What do they do again? Oh yea, well let's try them'" (Nicola 711_0055, 09.57-10.17).

Youth work was not always considered an 'afterthought'. Its capacity to enrich young lives was recognised by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) in youth work inspections in the past. More recently, Tony Gallagher, the National Lead for Youth Strategy at Ofsted, asserted that "youth work is a valuable tool in helping pupils engage with the community and develop their personal and social skills" (London Youth, 2013). The workers, too, believed in the value of what they were doing and their professional identity was infused with understanding the 'art and science' of their professional roles. However, the dismantling of local youth provision and increasing managerialism was disrupting their professional equilibrium. It was as if the workers had come with their professional craft and experience to perform one role when another was expected of them. Metaphorically, they had come onto the field to play a football match and instead found they were expected to play rugby. Not only had the rules changed, but the goalposts were looking rather different too.

In their accounts of practice, the youth workers showed confidence in their professional roots but, conversely, misgivings over their marginal positioning on both the professional landscape and in public esteem. It was a predicament that becomes clearer through the lens of models of professional identity. Baxter (2011), for instance, argued that professional identity is forged by interaction between the four strands of public perception, policies, ethics and resistance discourses. When this model is applied in this research study, two of the four elements are in abeyance, for there appears to be limited external recognition of youth work and its insufficient legislative base is leaving workers with their values framework and plethora of resistance discourses to argue against the tide. An alternative construction of professional identity as "provisional" (Ibarra, 1999) provides a more fluid notion of identities evolving and adapting as work contexts change. The data supports this interpretation of the tenuous position of youth workers as they try to hold on to what they value as well as adapt to changing conditions.

YWID6B: 'Gatekeeping the field'

The workers made the case for a regulatory body for youth work to put the profession on a better footing: "I think a standardised body would make it more of what it should be about" (Helen, 711_0015, 09.48-09.52). It was apparent that this point of view was held more widely when the Institute for Youth Work (IYW) emerged under the aegis of the National Youth Agency in 2013, and then later, the IYW came into governance of its membership in 2015. However, having the IYW in place did not resolve all the concerns over practitioner registration or managing the licence to practise (Wylie, 2012; Bradford and Cullen, 2014).

How to monitor professional suitability was a vexed issue. There were cases when it appeared that “anybody can rock up and call themselves a youth worker” (Jason, 711_0015, 09.10-11), which was attributed to “the privatisation of youth work where qualifications aren’t required and they [the workers] have neither got the qualification nor the personality to be a youth worker” (Andy, 711_0023, 04.10-04.19). Nevertheless, having the professional degree did not necessarily mean that the graduate would make a good youth worker either for, given the pressure in Higher and Further Education for successful course completion rates, gaining the required academic standard might transcend any uncertainty over professional suitability. Investing more in CPD opportunities for youth workers could be one way of addressing any shortfall and moreover, would enhance existing skills for practice amongst the workforce.

The recurring emphasis on ‘being professional’ underlined the workers’ personal investment in this occupation and a desire for it not to be under-valued. The case was made for better ways of validating good youth work and tackling bad practice, perhaps through a non-governmental “good youth work guide” (Jason, 711_0017, 23.38) with “trusted expertise” (ibid, 23.32) that could enable the “good youth work projects to be seen and recognised” (ibid, 19.03-08). It was a suggestion that would fit in with the remit of former Ofsted inspections of youth services, which had furnished good examples of practice in the past (see YWID6A).

Youth work was seen as having influence at the meso and micro levels of society, where the meso level might be considered to be the local organisation or community and the micro level as the work with an individual or group. Examples of some of the positive effects at meso and micro levels, even to the extent of saving a life (see page 66), have already been mentioned in this study. However, the workers were also aware of the need to look beyond these more localised spheres of influence and be proactive, to “make a case for ourselves” (Ben, 711_0045, 09.30-1), by taking responsibility for promoting their good practice more widely:

> “I think nationally we need to up the ante and I think there’s lots of us right across the country doing amazing work but not getting the right recognition” (Nicola 711_0056, 01.19-32)

Given this suggestion that ‘nationally’ youth workers ‘need to up the ante’, attention now turns to consider efforts to re-position professional youth work nationally and to look into participants’ views on government youth policy.

YWID6C: ‘Views on national standing of youth work’

The youth work sector had been involved in lobbying politicians to raise issues of youth service provision in Parliament and this had triggered two Early Day Motions. The first EDM1013 ‘Youth work and youth service’ (House of Commons, 2010) led into a debate that triggered

the ‘Services for Young People’ hearings in 2011, which enabled a few youth workers to have a brief audience with parliamentarians. This temporary access to the seat of macro power did not appear to mitigate Coalition government thinking and each player subsequently resumed their original position in the power relations. The second EDM488 ‘Youth Services’ attracted the signatures of 145 Members of Parliament (House of Commons, 2014), showing residual support for universal youth provision amongst MPs but primarily from the Opposition benches (see table 21 with timeline comparison of events 2010-2016 in relation to this research study). Meanwhile, the Coalition government made its position clear: “youth policy is primarily a matter for local government” (HM Government, 2013b, 32).

As this research data was being collected in 2013, the government programme of austerity measures continued to unravel, with dwindling funding of public services creating a shortfall that potentially might be met by voluntary organisations or private sector enterprise. Central government policy was leaving local government with painful choices over which services to defend. The consequences pertinent to this study were the rapid depletion of resources to local youth and community provision (see earlier discussion under YWID5A-B) and, in addition, several research participants reported receiving more requests for help to deal with cuts in welfare benefits and services.

The government agenda on youth and community work revolved around the ‘Big Society’ initiative and National Citizen Service (NCS). The ‘Big Society’ appeared to embody virtues that youth workers might favour, from valuing voluntary work to increasing civic participation and power-sharing at the local level. However, it only evoked a muted and somewhat sceptical response among research participants who deemed it to be “very optimistic” (Jason, 711_0016) and resembling “a fairy tale; it is a nice story; is it going to happen? No, it might happen” (Scott, 711_0016, 09.50-57). Others anticipated problems on the ground where certain interest groups already dominated community facilities: “just because they [local people] know the community, doesn’t mean they are going to act in a way to the benefit of the community” (Ed, 711_0016, 11.03-09). Uncertainty about how the ‘Big Society’ project would work in practice turned out to be more widespread and in due course, it slipped off the political agenda. By 2015, the ‘Big Society’ initiative was judged to have failed, not least because of the over-reliance on market-based competition rather than collaborative models of practice and moreover, because of the withdrawal of resources rather than investment into communities most in need (Civil Exchange, 2015, 7-8). Furthermore, it has to be pointed out that these same factors that led to failings in the ‘Big Society’ have also stymied the delivery of grass roots youth work in recent times.

The participants made no mention of the Coalition government's 'Positive for Youth' strategy (HM Government, 2013a) and only minimal references to its National Citizen Service (NCS). One explanation is that these youth workers were not involved in delivering the discrete NCS programme, which in 2013 was in its pilot stages of development. Nevertheless, the NCS was to emerge as a favoured government policy with increasing investment and more recently, with a National Citizen Service Bill in the next Parliament (Woodhouse, 2016). Beyond the UK, the European Union offered one platform for youth workers to debate issues affecting young people and express solidarity (European Youth Convention, 2010, 2015) but this did not appear to mitigate policies on the ground.

The contextual evidence suggests that there was some political support for youth work throughout this period but overall the workers had limited expectations of politicians. They contended that politicians did not understand youth work and attributed this to their different societal positioning: "they [politicians] just don't like us; we are informal educators and we're working class and end of - we're not important enough" (Jade, 711_0023, 16.26-16.31).

Invariably, despite engaging in work with young people who constitute a significant sector of society, the youth workers were finding themselves positioned on the periphery:

> "I think the profession itself was always seen as a bit anti-establishment and radical and alternative and I suppose, you know democratic; true democracy - we want to hear what people say, we allow people to air their views. We might challenge it but you know, I think we have scared part of the establishment many years ago and we're still, we're still feeling that now" (Ben, 711_0045, 09.44-10.15).

Being 'radical' and 'alternative' builds a youth work identity associated with 'other' and separated from 'mainstream'. It suggests alignment with those who are disempowered and struggling to be heard. Unsurprisingly, this stance feeds into discourses of resistance and remembrances of previous struggles over commitment to and investment in the sector:

> "Ever since I came into youth work, that's when in 2000, kind of like cuts were coming (sic), but I was always told then that youth services were always part of this cycle of cuts" (Andy, 711_0022, 07.32-07.42).

The case for funding youth work was just one of several recurring issues competing for public attention throughout this period as shown on the time line, see table 21. This timeline includes the period immediately before and after the research period, 2010-2016.

Table 21:

Table 21: A selection of key dates of political, youth work and research activity 2010-2016			
Year	**Political events**	**Some youth work events**	**This research study**
2010	Election of Coalition Government (May). Austerity measures. Launch of 'Big Society' initiative. Early Day Motion 1013 'Youth Work & Youth Service' (Nov). National Citizen Service pilot studies.	Declaration of 1st European Youth Convention (July). In UK, youth rallies against cuts. Westminster Hall debate on future of youth work (Nov).	Enrolment on doctorate programme. 'Windows on youth work practice', presentation on preliminary research at Collaborative Action Research Conference (CARN) at Anglia Ruskin Univ. (Nov)
2011	Services for Young People hearings in Parliament. 'Riots' in England (August). 'Positive for Youth' government youth policy (Dec).	Witness testimony to Services for Young People hearings (Jan-June). Nat. Youth Lobby of Parliament (Oct).	'Discourses from youth work practice: the youth worker's story' co-authored conf. paper on preliminary study at Int. Narrative Practitioners' Conf. Glyndŵr Univ. (June)
2012	Leveson Inquiry into the Press (2011-2012). London Olympics (Aug - Sept). Hillsborough Independent Inquiry (2010-2012).	Young Foundation publishes youth 'outcomes framework' (July). Youth rallies against cuts.	Research Pilot Study (April). 'Analysing Practitioners' Stories' presentation on preliminary and pilot studies at Y&C TAG Conference, Brathay Hall, Cumbria (May)
2013	National Citizen Service expansion (2013-2015) Legalisation of same sex marriage (July) Continuing programme of austerity measures	Choose Youth Manifesto (Feb). Youth rallies against cuts. NYA launch Institute for Youth Work (IYW) (Oct).	Substantive research ethical approval (Jan); data collection (April-August 2013). 'Walking a fine line', paper at Discourse-Power-Resistance Conf. (DPR13) at Greenwich Univ. (April). 'Making sense of the data', presentation at BSA Youth Study Group, London (Nov)
2014	Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (2014-ongoing). Scotland Ind. Referendum, vote to remain (Sept). Early Day Motion 488 'Youth Services' (Nov).	Youth rallies against cuts. Unison Report on 'The Damage' to UK's Youth Services (July).	Research writing and data analysis.
2015	Election of Conservative Government (May). Anti-austerity rallies across UK (June). Hillsborough Inquest hearings 2014-2016.	Declaration of 2nd European Youth Convention (April). 100 years anniversary of YCW education	Data analysis and research writing.
2016	Brexit vote to leave EU (June); resignation of PM David Cameron; Theresa May becomes PM (July). Chilcot Report on Iraq (2009-2016). National Citizen Service Bill announced.	Closure of NCVYS (April) after 80 years. Merger talks between UK Youth (founded 1911) and National Youth Agency (founded 1964) (Aug).	'Time to listen: the youth worker's experience', paper at Keele Univ. Counselling Conf. (May). 'Handing over our ethics?' Journal paper on pilot study (June). 'Grass roots praxis' presentation at Liverpool Hope Univ. Conf. (June)

YWID6D: ‘Professional contribution and legacy’

In this final section, attention is given to considering the contribution these workers are making to the youth work profession. Firstly, it begins by acknowledging the influence of biography in setting the scene for the type of contribution the workers might make. Pertinent to shaping this contribution was the intersection between a worker’s particular interests and opportunities that might arise in fieldwork situations. Secondly, the workers’ contribution is considered in terms of their workplace seniority which was positioning them as leaders and mentors for the next generation of youth workers. Thirdly, stock is taken of the workers’ professional commitment and continuing enthusiasm for their chosen profession.

The professional contribution of these workers was often framed by meanings derived from their own experiences of adolescence and entry into youth work as noted earlier (see YWID1). In addition, the impact of these biographies appeared to find expression in particular forms of social action that became enmeshed within their professional identity and recognised as such: “there’s a lot of my own personal history invested in who I am as a youth worker” (Andy, 711_0031, 03.45-52). This connecting thread could be seen in another worker’s account of her “claim to fame” (Nicola, 711_0052, 02.03). Nicola described her first experience of a youth club in the 1970s when she and her friends managed to negotiate access to the local ‘boys only’ youth provision. It took some persistence to make the next transition from being seen as ‘the girls who worked behind the coffee bar’ to being accepted amongst the main membership of the youth club. In retrospect, it was such small steps by many individuals that stimulated the equalities agenda in youth work practice. Moreover, Nicola’s reflections on her later practice showed a continuing sensitivity to the needs of young women and looking out for ways to support them through barriers they might encounter.

The data in this study suggests that youth work was a place where personal and professional interests could intermingle harmoniously. It was due in part to awareness that youth work “attracts all sorts [of workers] because you can involve all your interests” (Ed, 711_0013, 12.31-34), which could lead to scenarios ripe for innovative practice evolving from young people’s needs while drawing on workers’ interests and professional skill base. Amongst some of the memorable examples of practice shared by participants were the introduction of dance classes into the school curriculum for young men; supporting a young man with severe ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) to develop his passion for ‘free running’ (an acrobatic and athletic discipline) and using video work to help young men campaign and establish the first BMX skate park in the region. In this last example, the worker commented on the “huge developments in individuals” (Andy, 711_0034, 04.41-44). Most noticeably, one young man went from:

> "being quite shy and not particularly confident, bullied a little bit in the group…to taking centre stage and speaking out to other young people who were at that event, about what they were doing and about how they could get involved in supporting their campaign to get a skate park" (ibid, 04.49-05.18).

The residual power of residential youth work came through in another account where a young man told his youth worker a year later:

> "that residential changed my life...it was the things that we done, them exercises really made me get to know meself (sic) and it made me make choices in life" (Ben, see extract 8, appendix 15).

Another worker explained how a group of young men were enthused and facilitated to produce a healthy eating rap CD that was then performed in the town hall. Later, this group shared examples of healthy eating and led discussion with their peers in the district youth forum. These cogent explanations of youth work in practice exemplified worthwhile contributions that were being made not only in group situations but also with individuals, by, for example, helping a young man cope with failure, providing support to rebuild the confidence of a young woman who was being bullied or working in partnership with the school nurse to facilitate a young woman's re-entry to education.

> "If I see a young person whether that's through a peer-mentoring or getting them in a role, whether that is just through informal chats over pool table, if I can see that that young person has developed, I, I know I have got value in my work" (Jason, 711_0017, 07.45-08.00) .

Primarily, the data suggests that workers assessed the merits of their own contribution by seeing if their role was benefitting young people, a stance that appeared to derive from a belief that "the rewards are in the work, I think, in doing a good piece of work or the relationships you build" (Alistair, 711_0021, 12.14-19). Giving priority to potential benefits for young people appeared to stimulate partnership work with other agencies, for it could provide new opportunities for young people as seen above, by leading on dance classes for young men or building bridges with young people on the periphery of mainstream provision. Besides which, as well as helping young people, such collaborative practices were also making a wider professional contribution, demonstrating what youth work could do and bringing it to the attention of other professional groups.

These workers reminisced about their own place in the youth work hierarchy. They were typically providing leadership in the workplace and using support and supervision to develop part-time staff and volunteers, "building that team up so you know that it's not only reliant on

you" (Jason, 711_0015, 12.36-12.40). They encouraged staff to take ownership of their own projects and mentored staff in aspects of the job where they struggled: "I work with them and train them and we support them and through that they get better" (Helen, 711_0017, 22.17-21). This investment in the staff team was a way to enhance youth work practice and fitted in with the ethos of the learning culture.

There was an expectation that similar support systems should still be in place for full-time staff with "people who understand and care, they invest in you and you are still willing to learn and try and better yourself as a practitioner" (Alistair, 711_0023, 06.42-06.50). Instead, the workers pointed out that their own sources of support from youth managers were greatly diminished because of service restructuring and staff redundancies. The loss of so many experienced colleagues was taking its toll and appeared to trigger emotions akin to bereavement - denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance – identified by Kűbler-Ross (1969) in her studies of the terminally ill. For a service that invested heavily in interpersonal relationships, this loss of professional comradeship, for whatever reason, was a significant blow:

> "I used to have inspirational people that were older than me, much older than me, in the youth service that would fight tooth and nail for the basics of what youth work is, what it isn't, and they have either passed away… [or been] wheedled out the back door" (Andy, 711_0021, 11.04-11.25).

As the youth workers became conscious of their own changing position, they were alert to the challenge of whether "to become that person that tries to step into those shoes and start fighting" (Andy, 711_0021, 11.38-11.41). Earlier than expected, several workers found themselves becoming the professional elders and role models for newcomers to the youth work scene.

Throughout the data, the workers often emphasised their belief in the values and practices of youth work. They used words such as "passion" to express enthusiastic commitment to their chosen profession. 'Being committed' was endorsed by many because "for most youth workers, it's not a job, it's something that they believe in" (Nicola, 711_0055, 04.51-55). It might be inevitable that these workers who chose to take part in this research are also highly motivated to present their profession in a favourable light. Those who were disenchanted with youth work would not perhaps wish to take the time to provide accounts of work that was no longer meaningful to them. Certainly, for the participating workers, the research appeared to offer the opportunity to articulate their youth work point of view, as they produced accounts infused with personal and professional meanings.

Amidst their reflections, it was evident that workers were attempting to safeguard their practice traditions when they came up against more limited ways of 'youth-working':

> "I'm finding it frustrating to be a youth worker at the moment because you have got a certain way of doing it and you want to do it right, and then you have got people doing it in a very watered down (way) with no sort of equal opportunities, anti-oppressive basis underpinning their practice" (Greg, 711_0025, 01.45-02.05).

Some of this poor practice was distorting the image they wanted to represent of youth work. However, as they shared their ideas about youth work, the workers brought their own vision back into focus. Greg, for example, pointed out how the support of colleagues was helping him to make sense of the pros and cons of present youth work dilemmas. Moreover, it was helping him to adapt to situations and even affirming him in his work:

> "As I talk it through, I think ok, I know why it is and how much control have I got or how much influence have I got on that; how can I change that, you know, and then do you become frustrated or feel sort of a bit sort of ineffective, or do you feel sort of how are you going to go forward in doing it, you know, how are you going to make a difference? I think a lot of us have got a good base-line knowledge, understanding and commitment to being, going the right way and doing it right" (Greg, 711_0030, 01.44-02.22).

The optimistic prognosis was evident in remarks such as "I am confident that youth work will, you know, be recognised again in the future" (Victoria, 711_0039, 05.59-06.03). There was still a combative spirit making the case for better recognition for the professional skill base:

> "I'd like people to recognise us as you know a professional body of workers that actually do deliver and can deliver patiently with quality, quality assurance comes with our job" (Nicola 711_0055, 10.20-33).

Underpinning all, was a continuing sense of pride and confidence in what being a youth worker meant:

> "I am really proud to be a youth worker and it's not that I'm a failed teacher or a failed social worker or anything else, I'm a youth worker, that's what I do and I'm very clear about what that is and what that means and that to me is being professional. It's not about certificates on the wall, or how many hours I've studied, it's about being, being absolutely clear about this, this is what we do" (Jessica, 0711_0050, 04.58-05.27).

Conclusion

The views captured in this chapter show a period of turbulence in youth work and other social welfare professions. The youth workers were shaken by waves of austerity and managerialism that appeared to diminish the value of youth work and its standing in public life. These were stirring times that threatened to derail traditional youth work values and practices but which

nevertheless appeared to have toughened youth workers' resolve and vociferous commitment to young people. The narratives describe the workers' improvisational capabilities in dealing with evolving professional dilemmas and elaborate on instances of innovative practice that was making a difference to young lives. As such, their accounts provide some answers to research questions on 'the professional knowledge used by youth workers' and 'examples of practice that provide evidence of the value of youth work'. They also make a positive contribution to the archives of professional youth work practice.

Chapter 7 Discursive findings on youth work identities and practices

Following the thematic analysis, this chapter deploys a narrative-discursive analysis to investigate constructions of youth workers' professional identity and to provide a response to part four of the research question that was inquiring into 'how youth workers make sense of and construct accounts of their professional practice'. This approach draws on narrative analysis, conversation analysis and Gee's 'working with identities building tool' (Gee, 2014a; 2014b) which were introduced earlier in Chapter 4 (see 4.6.2-3), and is supported by a guide to transcription symbols and glossary of discursive terms in appendix 8.

This discursive scrutiny of the data was founded on the premise that the transcripts were "texts and talks in social practices" (Potter, 1997, 146) and were socially constructive in nature (Gergen, 2009). Moreover, applying a discursive lens to selected extracts of data was a way to illuminate the rich descriptive detail of the discursive phenomena at work in the professional youth work discourse. Nevertheless, selecting these extracts was not straightforward as there was much of interest across the corpus of data. It was a process that involved replaying audio-recordings and reviewing data transcripts to identify suitable extracts from both the focus groups and interviews. This activity produced several suitable examples which were then reduced to six in order to represent each of the thematic categories introduced in previous chapters.

This final selection of data extracts was based on three factors. Firstly, it aimed to portray at least one aspect of each thematic category; secondly, to enable exploration of the dialogical and discursive features of the data and its socially constructivist nature and, thirdly, to include data that might enable reflection on my role in the research process. In addition to meeting this criteria, there was the wish to enable many of the participating youth work voices to be heard, given that this research project was affording one of the few discursive spaces to these youth workers to talk about their professional roles and practices and potentially reach out to a wider audience with an interest in work with young people.

The final selection of data extracts appears on table 22 and is annotated with the Youth Work Identity (YWID) coding (see appendix 10). Each extract was given a working title that used key words from that extract and which, moreover, was introduced in most cases by the present participle 'being', which was deemed an appropriate way to present these constructions of 'being a youth worker'. Further details informing these particular data choices appear as part of the introduction to each extract later in the chapter. These extracts varied in length in order to start at a suitable juncture in the group or interview conversation and follow the social interaction until the sequence of talk shifted to another aspect. Grbich (2013) supports this more extensive presentation of data for it arguably provides "the best way to bring your reader

close to the experiences you wish to transmit" (Grbich, 2013, 294). It is believed that this approach has contextualised the extracts for analysis and, in addition, has afforded more detail of 'youth work in practice', thereby addressing one of the issues raised earlier, that youth work is poorly understood in the public domain (YWID4A). In line with such thinking, two supplementary discursive extracts were also selected – 'Being an educator' and 'Changing lives' – and they are appended with brief notes in appendix 15.

Table 22: The relationship of thematic categories to selected discursive extracts		
	Thematic Category	**Title of extract**
1	Becoming a youth worker (YWID1D)	'Learning to drive'.
2	Youth work values and ethos (YWID2F, YWID2C)	'Being professional' and 'the voluntary relationship'.
3	Leading and serving (YWID3F)	'Being an advocate'.
4	Practice tensions and wisdom (YWID4B)	'Being professional - caring, inept or other'.
5	Changing times (YWID5B, YWID5C)	'Fighting the corner'
6	Being professional –where to now (YWID6A)	'Being a professional youth worker'.

Characteristic features of story-telling emerged in their accounts as speakers organised and shared experiences with colleagues. Gergen (1994) offers a typical criteria for the construction of a narrative that 'establishes a valued end point'; 'selects events relevant to the endpoint'; involves 'the ordering of events'; provides a coherent 'stable identity' across the storyline and makes 'causal linkages' to interconnect different parts of the story into a cohesive whole (Gergen, 1994, 250-252). These narrative features are briefly explored in the analysis along with scrutiny of the social conventions of 'turn-taking' (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974; Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 1984, 1996; Have, 2007). This is a concept from conversation analysis (CA) that describes how speakers structure talk for their particular audience (known as "recipient design", Sacks et al. 1974). They may choose (or 'prefer') a particular form of words from various options (also called "preference organisation", Have, 2007, 137) and design their turn at speaking in keeping with the sequence of talk (known as "sequential positioning", Schegloff, 1984). The turn-taking observable in the data transcripts reveals speaker rhetoric and dexterity in the structuring of narratives and forging of identities.

Riessman (2008, 8-10) argues that such narratives are often mediated for the present context; they are persuasive because of their structuring and use of rhetoric and may, therefore, trigger action. As such, these accounts can be seen as active constructions of roles and practices, which accords with Ibarra's construct of 'provisional' professional identities (1999)[7] that are responsive to changing contexts. This active ingredient also concurs with the thinking of Stephanie Taylor (2007) in her depiction of 'narrative as construction and discursive resource'

[7] See discussion on 'the professional concept and discourse', section 2.4 of this thesis.

and the applied discursive approach of Gee (2014a; 2014b) who investigated speakers' use of language to inform, act and create identities.

The first two discursive extracts provide examples of the researcher inaugurating the research inquiry in a "business-like" (Goffman, 1981, 102) manner to address "the exigencies of work in progress" (ibid, 98), indicating that the previous sequence has ended and a new one begun. Later extracts are drawn from the body of the discussions but at a point where a recognisable new sequence of conversation was beginning. The data is annotated with CA transcription symbols in order to show the social interaction that constructed these accounts. They include features such as underlining to show speaker emphasis, short pauses in talk by a dot within brackets (.), an equals sign = for latched on talk, words such as laughter to show where this occurred in context and three dots …to show where material was omitted in this transcription. The letter 'R' represents the researcher. (For a full list, see appendix 8). In the analysis following each extract, time is given to consider assumptions underpinning the talk and discursive practices that clarify subject positions and construct social identities. It is to these discursive and dialogical aspects of the data that attention now turns.

7.1 Discursive extract 1: 'Learning to drive'

This first discursive extract includes the metaphor 'learning to drive' to describe the experience of 'Becoming a youth worker', (YWID1D 'Opening doors through education'). Learning was a recurring concept in the youth workers' narratives of practice. It was present in their formative professional journeys, in their reflective learning on practice and in their accounts of creating learning opportunities for young people to learn from their own experiences.

Discursive Extract 1: 'Learning to drive'	
R. 1 2	Do you think your ideas and practices or practice of youth work has changed since you first started?
Andy 3 4 5 6 7	Mmm. Has it changed? I suppose it has changed. Erm, you learn by making mistakes I suppose. Erm, you go to university and it's all there in theory, then you come out into the big, bad world and you realise actually, (.) there's a lot more to it than what you get taught at Uni, but hopefully, what you learnt at Uni helps you hit the ground running. Erm.
Alistair 8 9	It's like a driving, driving lessons and stuff and then you pass a test and then you're=
Group 10	=Mm *((*chuckles*))*=
Alistair 11	=ready to go out on your own. Yea.
Andy 12 13 14	Yea, so it's definitely developed. I think that's why youth work was so good for me and I think when you see young people come through from erm being a young person to being, going on to become a youth worker, you're very, it's a

15 16 17	lot of reflective practice and you're looking at what you do and how you engage with people and do things and that makes you a better person and a better youth worker hopefully, so it's very cathartic (.) I think.
Thornville focus group, question 1, 'becoming a youth worker'; 711_0019, 01.30-02.31	

From the outset, there are noticeable signals that this is *Andy's* story. The extract opens with Andy acknowledging the question by repeating part of it rhetorically (line 3) and constructing his response, in the process of which he accepts Alistair's contribution, echoing his "yea" before retaking the initiative. This is a conversational move signalled by Andy's repetition of the phrase "I think" (lines 12-13), which Goffman (1981, 106) interprets as a way for a speaker to "animate" himself in the conversation. Further on, Andy aligns himself with "reflective practice", a well-established professional trait (Schön, 1987; Moon, 1999; Thompson and Thompson, 2008) and in doing so, implies his professional credentials. Moreover, he creates the reflective practitioner identity in this narrative as he gives an informal description of how he 'does' reflective practice in his work (lines 15-16).

It is a narrative that fits Gergen's story-telling criteria (1994, 253) with, for example, in lines 3-7, Andy working towards his valued endpoint of emerging from university to "hit the ground running" by repeating some key words such as "university/ Uni" and "learning" that create continuity across the storyline and puts the story into an orderly sequence that leads up to his conclusion. Noteworthy, too, in this extract is the way group interaction takes its turn in co-constructing the narrative. The group presence is suggested through their appreciative "mms" and the sound of "chuckles" for Alistair's learner driving analogy that appears to resonate with participants. Andy's hesitancy, implied by the "erms" (lines 3, 4 and 7), may also appear to give the space to allow Alistair to come in with an image that transposes Andy's ideas into an everyday experience. As such, it appears to exemplify Lakoff's 'contemporary theory of metaphor' (1992) in which he argues that metaphors are used to cross domains and make abstract ideas more concrete.

Alistair's metaphor associates two different ideas - the theory and practice of learning to drive and the apprenticeship of a youth worker. Both involve understanding theory and putting it into practice. The analogy appears to make the concept of becoming a youth worker more visible by putting it in terms of learning to drive. The imagery has appeal to the listeners and to this researcher for not only is it framed and delivered effectively into Andy's account, but it also contributes to the 'learning' refrain that appears across the data. It appears to embody being open to learning, to learning from experience and to its beneficial (and "cathartic") attributes, which can be associated with theories of experiential learning (Boud et al., 1993), developing professional practice (Eraut, 2002) and pervasive discourses on lifelong learning.

The transcription of this extract fits into the conversation analysis genre (Heritage, 1997; Have, 2007) for it portrays "talk-in-interaction as a domain of social activity that is inherently ordered and not reducible to personality" (Wooffitt, 2001, 52). In short, it is an orderly sequence of talk that opens with an 'adjacency pair' for the researcher's question is followed by the respondent's answer. It includes examples of 'turn-taking' in the conversation between speakers, the use of acknowledgement or response tokens such as "yea", and is sprinkled with "erm" and "mm" vocalisations which are typically found in 'naturally occurring talk' (Taylor, 2001). It also provides examples of the CA 'membership category device' (MCD) and 'category-bound activity' (CBA), with the main speaker identifying himself with both learning and reflective practice in this narrative. In the next extract, the speaker introduces some of the other professional language that is shared amongst youth workers.

7.2 Discursive Extract 2: 'Being professional' and 'the voluntary relationship'

This interview extract contributes to themes on 'Sharing youth work values and professional ethos' (YWID2). Noticeably, its content has relevance for more than one social identity or thematic category, for it touches on 'being informal educators', discusses 'professional standing' and the 'voluntary relationship'. The extract is included here to explore the speaker's animated construction of professionalism (YWID2F) and her descriptive detail of the voluntary youth work relationship (YWID2C).

Discursive Extract 2: 'Being professional' and 'the voluntary relationship'	
R. 1 2	So would you say that there's a common language … amongst youth workers which show we actually do have a common way of looking at things?
Nicola 3 4 5 6 7	I think we do. I think we, one of the common phrases that we all use is 'we are, we are not teachers (.) in a, in a formal setting, we are informal educators', erm (.4) and when, I suppose in a way (.), now, we are seen more and more as a profession, we never used to be. I always used to think that youth workers were erm, the poor relation
R 8	mm
Nicola 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18	erm in the authorities and I think that actually, sums it up because youth service is non-statutory body in the council; it's non-statutory erm and that speaks volumes to me because it's as if erm, when the cuts come, 'I will get rid of the non-statutory because, you know, what are they?' But whilst (.) we are professional, we have professional qualifications to prove that, but it's not about that, it's about our professional attitude to our work, we're committed and I think that's one of the things that youth workers would say we are. But it's not, for most, for most youth workers, it's not a job; (.2) it's something that they believe in, it's something that they do. For me, it's a bonus I get paid, (.2) Erm it's a necessity that I get paid (laughs) =
R 19	=(laughs)
Nicola20 21	(laughs) =let's make no bones about that one, but erm for youth workers, I think the majority of youth workers see it as a privilege to be in the position (.)

R 22	Mm=
Nicola23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39	=that they're in and that they can make chan-, make differences and make changes, where those changes and differences you know are accepted. We don't force, you can't force it, because as I said before it's a voluntary relationship between you and the young person, well the young person and you. You know, they're not forced to go to a youth club and they're not forced to talk to you when we're in there because I see us, me, I take our youth service to them on their own environment. (.3) They choose to stay and talk with me (.) they could turn their back and go and I've got no jurisdiction on that. In school, (.2) they don't have that (.) so when they, when they do stop and they talk and they open up or they listen or whatever, whatever interaction we have with that young person, I know it's because they want *((taps the table))* that interaction and it could be a negative one but I always think, (.2) but all this grief you're giving me or my team, (.3) you know, you must want *((taps the table))* some sort of a conversation, you must want some sort of interaction because it's your territory, you can go and walk, but you don't, you stand there so obviously to me that gives me the green light to say 'OK, let's work through this and let's go' and I think that for the majority of youth workers is the way we work.
Interview, question 7, 'the language of youth work', 711_0055, 03.26-06.29	

From the outset, the opening sequence begins to establish the relative positions of interviewer and interviewee in the discourse. It becomes apparent that by structuring the first question to include the first person plural, "we" (line 2), I am arguably positioning myself as a member of this community and not as an outside researcher. It attests to my role as an insider researcher inquiring into this form of professional practice and thereby situates Nicola as the informant who will respond to that positioning. As Nicola begins to speak from that position, she displays many communication skills (also known as "communicative ecologies" (Gumperz, 1999, 2015) that filter her professional thinking on the subject matter. Noticeably, she represents different voices in the debate on the standing of professional youth work (lines 5-12), in a manner that affords glimpses of "the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly-produced story lines" (Davies and Harré, 1990, 4).

From one position, Nicola speaks as a youth worker noticing the increasing professional recognition of youth workers from their lowly status of being "the poor relation" (line 7). She then counters this by speaking from a second position that she attributes to "the authorities": "when the cuts come, I will get rid of the non-statutory because, you know, what are they?" (Lines 11-12). This last proposition is introduced by "as if", a term that Schriffin (2001) describes as a connecting 'discourse marker', and it appears to bring forward the possibility that these are the sort of remarks that "the authorities" might make.[8] The rhetorical "what are

[8] Note, this is different to the satirical usage of 'as if!' which seems to imply that an event is highly unlikely.

they?" appears to connect with her metaphor of "the poor relation", an image usually associated with seeing a person or group as being of less value and leading to their inferior treatment. Discursively, Nicola uses these subject positions to co-produce her narrative and represent "the cumulative fragments of a lived biography" (Davies and Harré, 1990, 5). It is evident that these particular story lines were chosen from several alternative perspectives that could have been portrayed.

In the next mini-sequence of talk (lines 13-21), Nicola continues on the theme of youth workers' professional disposition and commitment - "it's something they believe in" (line16), before her narrative dips into bathos as she aligns two remarks, the first suggesting an altruistic investment of herself in the work, "For me, it's a bonus I get paid", followed by the anti-climactic and self-deprecating humour of: "Erm, it's a necessity that I get paid" lines (17-18). This could also be interpreted as a 'repair' to a speech error (Have, 2007) as Nicola further clarifies her remark, saying, "let's make no bones about that one" (line 20). It creates a lighter moment amid serious talk avowing allegiance to youth work as a vocation, with its "privilege" of working with young people in ways that can make a difference.

As this narrative unfolds, my presence as the interviewer contributing to the interaction appears muted though may still be having an impact as I acknowledge and join in the laughter at Nicola's use of irony (lines 18-20) but also give an interested "mm" to her particular turn of phrase in "the poor relation" (line 7) and youth workers feeling the "privilege" (line 21) of their position, which appears to suggest that these ideas are resonating with me. Noticeable, too, is Nicola's confident presence throughout her story by her frequent use of 'I-Statements'. Gee (2014a, 173) advocates looking closely at 'I-Statements' and particularly at the choice of verbs which may be to do with knowing, feeling, taking action and so on, thereby shedding light on the speaker's ways of being in situations. Applying this 'discursive tool' here did highlight Nicola's active engagement in her narrative and her use of cognitive expressions such as "I think" and "I know" as well action statements "I take our youth service to them" (line 28).

The action statements appeared in the second part of this narrative when Nicola begins to explain the concept of the youth work voluntary relationship (lines 25-38). She makes the point that this is an informal chosen relationship on the young person's "territory" (line 36), by juxtaposing it with the young person's lack of choice in the school context (line 30), which is emphasised by repetition of "force" and "forced" (lines 25, 27). The interpretation of the youth work relationship being "voluntary" might be contested by those who argue that young people are socialised into behaving in certain ways to their elders and, given the power differential, walking away, even on their own territory, may not be so easy. Despite this caveat, it is evident that Nicola delivers an animated and paced account of how the voluntary relationship can work

in practice. She uses short pauses to create emphasis and moreover, twice taps the table on the word “want” (lines 33, 35) to give additional stress to the young person’s stake in having this relationship. A tacit understanding of non-verbal communication is implied by Nicola interpreting the continued presence of the young person still standing there (line 37) as giving her the metaphorical “green light” and permission to proceed with the interaction. It leads into her concluding remarks and ‘valued endpoint’ that brings her narration together, as she says, “and I think that for the majority of youth workers is the way we work” (lines 38-39).

By choosing words such as “force” and “territory”, Nicola evokes wider discourses on the way power is used to control young people’s use of many public spaces (Travlou, 2003; Whelan, 2015). Nicola’s language of “force” (lines 25, 27), “turn your back” (lines 29-30), “jurisdiction” (line 30) and “territory” (line 36) shows her awareness of the power dynamics in contested spaces and the domain she is moving through to gain acceptance. It underlines the argument that youth work is to do with being ‘in’ relationships ‘with’ young people, sharing power with young people as partners and the need for careful attention in building relationships. As such, it explains what being professional can mean to a youth worker and describes how youth workers may go about building a ‘voluntary relationship’ with a young person. Given its detail, it is a pertinent contribution to explanations of youth work practice.

7.3 Discursive Extract 3: ‘Being an advocate’

The third data sequence relates to the ‘Knowledge, skills and roles of youth work practice’ thematic category. It has interest for its dialogical interaction whereby the speaker moves between subject positions to explain his advocacy role (YWID3F) in youth work practice.

Discursive Extract 3: ‘Being an advocate’	
Ed 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	A lot of my role seems to be er an advocate in some way (.) for the young people, just somewhere in-between the young person and you know whoever (.) the other side is: it might be school, it might be a parent, it might just be (.) some random (.) adult neighbour or whatever and (.) not necessarily blocking off each side but trying to (.) pull together a little bit erm, and just being that person that can maybe relate a little bit to both when they seem to be (.) completely on different pages and not actually that far away, in some cases. In fact the more erm angry the disagreement, normally it’s that they’re actually quite close but just so little bit different that seems that they are more angry because they are so close but so far
R. 11	mm
Ed 12	Erm so I do a lot of (.2) advocacy in some ways, erm, yeah (.2)
R. 13	How did you (.) get yourself into that role?
Ed 14	Well I, just, erm, it’s being a youth worker I suppose erm.
R. 15	Mm

Ed 16 17 18 19 20 21	It's just one of those things like young people will sometimes come up to me and say 'you know, I'm struggling with this' or I'll ask them how their week is going, they'll say 'I'm struggling with this', and we'll try and unpack it a bit, but also sometimes adults will come up to me and say 'I'm having a nightmare with this teenager. What would you suggest?' And I'm just 'oh that's interesting. Five minutes ago, I had a conversation with that teenager about you=
Group 22	Mm. ((Chuckles))=
Ed 23	so yeah I don't know
Scott 24	That's ((*inaudible))*
Ed 25 26 27 28 29	(.) I suppose I've build up a lot of relationships with parents and teenagers over the years, erm so a lot, I suppose a lot of groundwork has gone into, well not that much, I mean, I've been in my post for nearly five years now (.) so they, a lot of people that I work with know me quite well so they feel like they can, but it is just persisting (.) and just being open to that really, I suppose.
Scott 30 31	Do you find there's a certain intuitiveness that you have (.) for being able to read people or (.)
Ed 32 33	Every now and then, sometimes, but sometimes I get it totally wrong at the same time, (.) er my wife can tell you that (.2)
Group 34	((brief chuckle))
Ed 35	It's just you, you can do your best to read when somebody's=
Scott 36	=Yea=
Ed 37 38 39	=feeling really down and you could be completely wrong and it could be that they don't want to tell you. (.2) Erm you can only do so much but just also be very open and non-judgmental when they are open with you=
40 Scott	=mm
Highbury focus group, question 2, 'youth worker's roles, relationships and activities'; 711_0014, 04.28-07.00	

In this extract, the youth worker is depicted acting as an advocate to support a young person who is experiencing difficulty in their relationship with another person or situation. It is an intermediary role, in which the youth worker tries to "pull (them) together a little bit" (line 5) by "just being that person that can maybe relate a little bit to both when they seem to be completely on different pages" (lines 5-7). The two questions (lines 13, 30-1) act to draw out more details of these conciliatory and negotiating interventions that youth workers undertake. Ed's initial response on his transition into that role is put in simple terms: "It's being a youth worker I suppose" (line 14), thereby implying that intervening to find common ground and manage conflict are taken-for-granted youth work roles. However, given that speakers choose their social language to suit who they are and who they are speaking to (Gee, 2014b), Ed's remarks could also be associated with awareness that he is talking to an audience of his peers. Thus, as he continues to speak, he makes more use of the phrase "I suppose" (lines 25, 26), a term associated with 'hedging' by discourse analysts, and this acts to downplay any special skills he has in this role in his talk with professional colleagues.

Among other interesting discursive features is Ed's introduction of different voices to develop his explication of the advocacy role. The sequence of talk here (lines 16-18) is an adroit communication for, in a balanced narrative, he gives both the young person's way of introducing an issue, "I'm struggling with this" and his own supportive response "we'll try and unpack it a bit". A second similarly balanced narrative emerges in lines 19-21 where the voice of an adult is heard "I'm having a nightmare with this teenager. What do you suggest?" which is countered by the inner voice of the youth worker "And I'm just 'oh that's interesting. Five minutes ago, I had a conversation with that teenager about you'". The advocacy role is to do with understanding the different positions on an issue and this is mirrored here by the taking up of different positions in his narration.

It is noticeable that "anger" is mentioned twice (lines 8, 9) implying the heightened emotions that may exist between the opposing factions. This emotional intensity is suggested too through Ed's choice of metaphors where the two parties appear "to be completely on different pages" (lines 6-7) and where an adult may speak of having a "nightmare" in dealing with a teenager. The term 'nightmare' conjuring up notions of a bad experience or ordeal, may imply that this is an embellished account. However, through the sequence of talk, there are "mms" to acknowledge the points Ed makes and, later on, Scott's "yea" (line 36) and the latched responses (shown through the equals signs) suggests acceptance of this representation.

Additionally, some of the serious tone of the discussion is broken up by the use of irony (lines 19-21, 32-33) which is appreciated in the "mms" and chuckles of the audience. Firstly, there is the ironic pairing of consecutive statements that begins to draw on recognisable discourses that demonise young people as 'problems' (lines 19-20), but which are then swiftly countered by the antithesis, where it is the adult who is 'the problem' for the young person (lines 20-21). In doing so, it suggests the world of difference that can exist between adolescent and adult expectations and experiences of each other. As youth workers speak up on behalf of young people, this can lead to charges of being partisan in their favour. However, closer scrutiny of this account suggests that the intervening youth worker is acting skilfully in listening to both sides of the argument and helping to bridge the gaps between those in contention.

In the second ironic turn, Ed's phrasing of "but sometimes I get it totally wrong at the same time, er my wife can tell you that" (lines 32-33) acts as a comic aside in which he mocks his own ability to 'get it right' all the time. Moreover, introducing Ed's wife as another character in the narrative can be interpreted as a device to infer dialogical interaction, through which, a 'not infallible' identity is constructed for Ed. These diverse discursive and dialogical interactions contribute to the performative qualities of this narrative and overall, construe youth work advocacy in terms of empathic listening and dispute resolution.

7.4 Discursive Extract 4: 'Being professional – caring, inept or other'

This next focus group extract was chosen to look more closely into practice tensions arising from 'Uneasy relationships with other agencies' (YWID4B). It shows the group interaction to construct their own favourable social identities by making comparisons with less favourable practice they associate with other professionals - in this case social workers.

Discursive Extract 4 : 'Being professional – caring, inept or other'	
Sophie 1 2 3 4 5	I know a lot of young people ask me whether they can talk to me, and then they'll, they'll say to me 'oh no,(.) we've been through this ((laughs)) a couple of times', you know, or 'no, I can't tell you anymore because of the confidentiality procedure', so that's, I find that (.2) I know it's necessary, (.) but I do find it a challenge, and where I fit into it and my role (.) at times.
Ed 6	It looks very easy on paper.
Sophie 7	It does, it looks, yeah.
Ed 8 9	If the young person is in *(inaudible crossed talk)* danger, then you need to (.) inform the next person; it makes perfect sense=
Sophie 10	=Yea
Ed 11	=but then explaining that to, you know, a teenager in tears and in front of you
Sophie 12	=Mm=
Ed 13 14	=can sometimes be er a bit heart-breaking, when you have invested so much into that person.
Sophie 15 16	An- and sometimes when erm you have got a soc- social worker who's got the tact of a sledgehammer ((laughs)) (.2)
Jason 17 18 19	I think that is the other side of the challenge. It's sometimes, I am saying things and I am like (.2), I am saying 'you know this is to help you' and part of my brain is going, (.2) 'am I actually confident that'=
Sophie 20	=yea=
Jason 21	='in six months' time'=
Sophie 22	=yea=
Jason 23	'this young person is going to be in a better position because of this'
Sophie 24	mm
Jason 25 26	because I don't always feel I have the confidence in the local services that they will (.7) be tactful or kind=
Sophie 27	=yea=
Jason 28 29	or compassionate, or- and I know that there are some amazing because I have worked with some=
Sophie 30	=yea=
Jason 31 32	=who are amazing and I have worked with others who (.) have the tact of a sledgehammer=
Sophie 33	=yea=
Jason 34 35 36	=and the personality of a brick and it's just, and that's really hard because you're like, I'm going to refer you to a service or I am going to get a service involved and I feel like it is a gamble whether you are going to benefit from this
Sophie 37	=yea=
Jason 38	=or actually possibly, (0.3) get pushed further away=

Sophie 39	=yea=
Jason 40	=from a solution
Highbury focus group, question 3, 'the challenges and rewards of your everyday practice'; 711_0015, 03.25-05.01.	

At an early stage, this sequence of talk illustrates how participants can interact in developing a narrative. This is suggested by the frequent if brief presence of 'response tokens' (Gardner, 2001) such as "mm" and "yea", which acknowledge and encourage different contributions and then there is the more noticeable example of the application of the same imagery ("tact of a sledge hammer", lines 16 and 31-32) by more than one speaker in the unfolding narration. These factors imply that participants are listening to each other, clarifying ideas with rhetorical dexterity and drawing on a "shared understanding" (Stenner, 1993, 114) and the "cultural currency" (ibid) of this practice community.

Among those shared ideas of practice is Sophie's early depiction of both the 'caring' youth worker whom young people can confide in and the 'responsible' professional who adheres to workplace protocols. These protocols of the "confidentiality procedure" (line 4) come into play when there is the potential of a disclosure in which the young person is seen to be at risk. This procedure requires the youth worker to share information through the inter-agency safe-guarding reporting structure in order to protect the young person. By standing on this principle, Sophie positions herself in line with the recognised ethical code of youth work (NYA, 2000).[9] However, this reporting procedure is interpreted as taking an emotional toll according to the second speaker Ed, who describes it as "a bit heart-breaking" (line 12) as he picks up on the caring dimension of the youth worker positioned close to the young person and who has "invested so much" in their relationship.

That this may not be quite the outcome to Sophie's original train of thought is implied by her subsequent 'dis-preferred' conversational turn (Pomerantz, 1984), in which she introduces a negative stereotype of the social worker (lines 15-16). Before moving on to explore that negative imagery, it is useful to look once again at some of the nuances in the "turn-design" (Have, 2007, 136) of Sophie's first piece of talk (lines 1-5). When Sophie uses the voice of a young person to say, 'I can't tell you anymore because of the confidentiality procedure" (lines 3-4), she is using a different subject positioning, not only to build her story but also to bring the perspective of young people to the fore. She represents their position as experiencing constraint in choosing who they can talk to about their sensitive issue while, on the other hand, the youth worker's usual relationship with the young person is disrupted. The confidentiality

[9] "Recognise the boundaries between personal and professional life and be aware of the need to balance a caring and supportive relationship with young people with appropriate professional distance" (NYA, 2000, 4)

procedure places the power to manage the situation elsewhere. Sophie uses 'I statements' to express her dilemma. Her "I know" serves to show she understands the reasons for it, but then, by her repeated use of "I" (lines 4-5) retains the focus on her uncertainty of how to be in this situation and perform her supportive role. It leaves the impression that policies and procedures may not only guide practice but also inhibit it.

In the next sequence of talk, two participants exchange some mixed experiences of working with social workers in carrying out such confidentiality procedures. They collaborate on using evocative imagery to produce negative representations of social workers with "the tact of a sledgehammer" (lines 14-15) and "the personality of a brick" (line 23). The image of "a sledge-hammer" conjures up ideas of the crude use of force and the wielding of a heavy instrument. By referring to 'tact' and 'sledgehammer' in the same phrase, the speaker creates an oxymoron where the juxtaposition of ideas makes an impact on the listener. It implies a criticism of high-handed professional practices in which there is a misuse of power and lack of tact in dealing with sensitive situations. "The personality of a brick" implies limited interpersonal skills in communication and as used by Jason, appears to act as a rider to his depiction of the 'sledgehammer professional' and gives linguistic balance and a rhythm to his preceding remarks (lines 31-34).

In the midst of this narration, Jason makes a brief change of 'footing' (Goffman, 1981), to represent a different point of view on social workers. His reference to "some social workers who are amazing" (lines 28-31) is firmly endorsed by his attaching "I know" and "I have" to these remarks. This change of footing is a reminder of the constructionist view of conversation in which speakers are constantly reframing their contributions to suit different contexts. Nevertheless, it is a brief endorsement of particular individuals who appear to be exceptional for the attribution is positioned briefly between the longer opening and closing remarks (lines 19-28 and 31-40) that show social workers in a more negative light. Through their contributions, these speakers have created some social distance between themselves and other professionals to present their own "socially significant identities" (Gee, 2014a, 25). This was achieved in the discussion by positioning youth workers more favourably in comparison to depictions of inept social work practice. It was perhaps inevitable that as the participants discussed their practice with their youth work audience of peers, they would be emphasising their own professional youth work skills and qualities and at times would contextualise it, by suggesting the apparent absence of such professional traits and understanding from others. Nevertheless, it may have been more reasonable to castigate instances of poor practice per se rather than demonise the social work community.

Across this data sequence, the participants are seeking to lay claim to the identity of the confidante and responsible professional, one to which other professionals with similar caring values may be attuned, if they are "tactful or kind or compassionate" (lines 26, 28). This is followed by a second identity formation, encoded here as inept professionals, with "the tact of a sledgehammer and the sensitivity of a brick" (lines 31-34), before the emergence of a third unknown group of professionals who may or may not be helpful to young people. By treating this last group as 'unknown', the speaker appears to treat them as 'other' and perhaps 'not one of us'. They are represented as unknown quantities, "I don't always have confidence in local services" (line 25) and "I feel like it is a gamble" (line 36), says Jason, in referring young people to their services. Moreover, it was interesting to note that the subsequent group discussion (not shown here) raised the spectre of workers from other agencies having similar misgivings about youth workers and seeing them as 'other' in their turn.

As noted earlier, 'I-Statements' often indicate the nature of the communication that is taking place. Sophie's talk appeared to portray some of the uncertainty she may experience in carrying out her role (lines 4-5) and this contrasted strongly with Jason's confident and frequent use of 'I statements' to assert his presence. Cognitive awareness is implied through his "I know", while the "I am" (and its inversion) (lines 17-19) keep the focus on him and lead in due course to his "I'm going to" (line 35) intentions of taking action. These speakers' different use of I-Statements was noticeable. It positioned one woman expressing some vulnerabilities about her role, while one of the men was actively showing where he stands, a disparity which implied some of the 'genderlect'[10] (Tannen, 1990) attributes of this interaction. The more assertive contributions of some male youth workers in this first focus group were also evident in the second focus group as can be seen in the next extract.

7.5 Discursive Extract 5: 'Fighting the corner'

This data sequence entitled 'Fighting the corner' investigates group interaction on identities and practices arising in relation to themes YWID5B and YWID5C from the fifth thematic category, 'Changing Times'. The annotation draws attention to the spirited group interaction as speakers design their conversational turn and position themselves in the discourse.

Discursive extract 5: 'Fighting the corner'	
Carl 1	… It's funding again isn't it? ((half laugh)) It all comes down to money.
Andy 2 3 4	We are chasing our old- well, ever since I came into youth work that's when in 1999-2000, kind of like the cuts were (.1) coming, but I was always told then that youth services were always part of this cycle of cuts, and what not.

[10] Genderlect - Tannen's theory that men and women communicate differently (that is cross-culturally), with women building rapport and sharing feelings while men are more interested in facts and status.

Carl 5	Because you are chasing the money all the time=
Andy 6 7 8	=Yeah but I think that is where the policy that has come out has, has led the youth service to-, we hope that-, it's a systemic failing within youth work to, to be able to say, this is what we do, this is how we do it and this is why it is good
Carl 9	Yea
Andy 10	and I think- I heard that we've not always been very good at that
R. 11	Mm
Andy 12 13 14 15	but now, those people that I was saying were above me that were maybe fighting the corner, have stopped fighting the corner for <u>that</u> and have started saying 'Well let's fit into their box, (.2) let's fit into the square box, (.2) do the targeted work'=
Carl 16	=Yea=
Andy 17 18 19	='to justify the work (.) and do the youth work, guerrilla-style in the background', which I think is a crazy because it will just get shrunk, shrunk and shrunk=
Carl 20	=Because it just compiles the problem each month=
Andy 21	=Yes=
Carl 22 23	=Because they look at the figures on paper and go 'oh look, we targeted it and all that got done, wasn't that brilliant'
Andy 24	Yea
Carl 25	They don't see the actual work that may- =
Andy 26	=De- <u>De-professionalizes us</u> and does all sorts of things (.5)
Carl 27 28 29	I wonder where sometimes they get their (.1) information from that they then use to (.1) create policies (.3) because sometimes it doesn't sound like (.5) the (.1) the country that we live in. They go 'their <u>needs</u> are this and this and this',
Andy 30	Mm=
Carl 31	=not where I live they're not.
Katherine (Kath) 32	They don't, they don't really believe that=
Carl 33 Kath.34	[=But then it's-] [=it's just it's all-]
Carl 35	=But it's central government making policies that affect the whole country-
Kath. 36 37	Yeah, it's because they want to cut the money (.) so obviously you just get it to fit into that don't you
Carl 38	Yea=
Kath. 39 40	='You know that if we are going to give you less money then (.1) you haven't got to do as much, we are only asking you to reach those and those and those'.
Thornville focus group, question 4, 'the influence of government policy on your practice', 711_0022, 07.28 - 09.08	

This sequence of talk affords a window on the focus group's dialogical interaction on present difficulties arising from funding cuts and targeting practices that they associate with government policy. The content of the discourse appears to show some unanimity but the annotation detail points to considerable disruption in conversational flow. This interpretation relies on the frequent presence of latched speech, where speakers follow on from each other

without pause, the interrupted speech patterns (lines 25 and 35), the overlapping talk (lines 33 and 34) and the 'dis-preferred' turn as in "yea, but" (line 6) in which Andy acknowledges but then provides a qualification to the previous speaker, which further implies different ideas about the subject matter. There is evidence of 'repair' in utterances as speakers check and re-structure their talk as seen in Andy's "we are chasing our old- well, ever since…" (line 2) and when he qualifies his view from "I think" to "I heard that…" (line 10), which could be construed as 'stake inoculation' (Potter, 1997) to avoid being seen to criticise colleagues directly.

As each speaker begins to talk in turn, it can be seen how their 'turn-design' was shaped by the previous contributions so talk is constantly active and being reframed to suit the context. Noticeably, the linguistic and culturally-aware device of creating a list, often packaged as a 'three-part list' (Jefferson, 1991; Wooffitt, 2001, 61) is much in evidence amongst the speakers. Andy makes use of the persuasive 'three-part list' more than once (see line 8; lines 18-19); which is a style of talking that is picked up by Carl (line 29) and then by Katherine (line 40). In the lead up to the first example (lines 6-8), Andy begins by providing an 'adjacency pairing' to Carl's remark, makes a readjustment and then delivers the thrust of his argument in his 'three-part list': "this is what we do, this is how we do it and this is why it is good" (line 8). This is a well-constructed list as it is introduced in the emphatic present tense of 'this is' and then modified by the adverbs 'what', how' and why', which have been identified as part of a "demystifying strategy" (Watkins, 2007). This persuasive formulae of talk is simplified in Andy's second 'three-part list' by his repetition of the word "shrunk". Nevertheless, it has dramatic impact for Andy's second format is copied by Carl in his structuring of "their needs are this and this and this" (line 29), which he couples with audible stress on the word "needs" to draw attention to his talk. Subsequently, Katherine follows this simpler format and reiterates "those" in the design of her conversational turn (line 40). These repeated patterns of speech suggest that these speakers are influencing each other not only by the content of their talk but also in their manner of speaking.

The social constructive nature of the dialogue produces visible representations of government policy, conforming youth workers and the potential of 'guerrilla' youth workers. Firstly, there is the government, whose policies have produced funding cuts, "where the policy that has come out has, has led the youth service to" (lines 6-7). This is an awkwardly-worded sentence structure but appears to fit Gee's description of "collocation patterns" (Gee, 2014b, 164) in which the pattern of speech is disrupted and its meaning co-located. This can be seen in this case, for Andy's speech was interrupted and so his later words (lines 6-7) refer back to his earlier explanation that "youth services were always part of this cycle of cuts" (line 4).

Increasingly, the sequence of talk positions government at some distance away from youth workers through the repeated use of the third person 'they', as in "they look at the figures" (line 22) and "they don't see" (line 25) and continues to the extent that Carl's further elaboration of the situation puts even more distance between government policy and his own understanding of the needs, when he says, "it doesn't sound like the country that we live in" (lines 28-29). At times, the speakers change their 'footing' in the discourse and move from using "they" to "we" to represent the government's perspective. Carl, for example, suggests that the government might argue, "'oh look, we targeted it and all that got done, wasn't that brilliant'" (lines 22-23) in order to justify their policies. This conversational style of manoeuvring positions between 'they' and 'we' is picked up by Katherine who uses "they" (lines 32, 36) but then makes a nimble change of 'footing' to use "we" and improvise from the government's position: "You know that if we are going to give you less money then you haven't got to do as much; we are only asking you to reach 'those' and 'those' and 'those'" (lines 39-40). In doing so, she deploys her own three-part of list and follows Carl's style of talk (lines 22-23) in bringing the government's counter-arguments into the conversation. Once more it is a discourse that draws attention to the distance that separates governmental youth policy and established youth work practice, for it points to the government's focus on working with "those" young people it defines as targets, while professional youth work continues to espouse universal provision for young people.

Secondly, the construction of the 'conforming youth worker' offers another interesting representation. It suggests there is some recognition that youth services may have brought this funding crisis on themselves by their "systemic failing" (line 6) to produce sufficient evidence of the value of their work and that this has contributed to some pragmatic acquiescence with government policy. Consequently, these workers appear to go along with the exigencies of national policy, despite its constraints, and this is metaphorically envisaged in, "let's fit into their box, let's fit into the square box, do the targeted work" (line 14-15). The analogy brings to mind ideas of 'round pegs and square holes' and suggests there is a mismatch here between youth work values of voluntary participation and being deployed to meet targets. Similarly, the 'box' analogy evokes the sense of a reductionist idea of the youth work phenomenon.

The third construct appears to be the 'guerrilla youth worker', that offers a default position to the 'conforming youth worker'. By outwardly conforming, the workers may still be able to engage in 'real' youth work "guerrilla-style in the background" (lines 17-18), a manoeuvre which appears to echo Hoyle and Wallace's proposition of "principled infidelity" discussed earlier in chapter two (2.1). The charged emotions about present dilemmas also imply some feelings of betrayal by those who "have stopped fighting the corner for 'that'" (line 13), where

“that” is said with emphasis and once again appears to be speech that is co-located, as it refers back to youth workers standing their ground and speaking up for youth work in terms of, “this is what we do, this is how we do it and this is why it is good” (line 7). Joining with those who “have stopped fighting the corner” (line 13) does not appear to be a proposition that appeals to Andy, for he uses the emotionally-charged word “crazy”, repeats “shrunk” (where he anticipates that youth work will continue to shrink) (lines 18-19) and the emphatic statement that what is happening, “de-professionalises us and does all sorts of things” (line 26). These forthright remarks carry conviction and make an impact on his audience of peers for there is a longer pause than usual before the next speaker picks up another conversational turn.

In this extract, the speakers’ interaction and repertoire of linguistic and rhetorical skills have constructed different representations of youth workers (and government) at this time. There have been some impassioned contributions that spoke on behalf of youth workers and against limited understanding of local needs and targeting practices that offer youth work to some but not all young people. It is an engaging account that acts to ‘defend the corner’ and reiterate professional allegiances to established practice traditions. It denotes continuing concern with sustaining the professional identity and raising its profile, discursive threads which permeate several extracts and re-appear once more in the final data selection.

7.6 Discursive extract 6: ‘Being a professional youth worker’

This sixth extract was selected to look more closely into ‘Views on professional standing’. It alludes to an improving youth work positioning among the professions as well as displaying some interesting interaction and change of ‘footing’ between researcher and interviewee.

Discursive extract 6: ‘Being a professional youth worker’	
Jessica1	It’s an age-old thing isn’t it about how can=
R. 2	=Mm=
Jess 3	=we evaluate what we do.
R. 4	Mm
Jess 5 6	We can evaluate a session but we can’t evaluate the impact that’s going to have on a young person’s=
R. 7 Jess 8	= [Mm] = [life]
R. 9	=Mm=
Jess 10	Because=
R. 11	= Mmm
Jess 12	it might not;
R. 13	Mm
Jess 14	because it might happen years down the line, so that’s an age-old=
R. 15 Jess 16	= [Mm] = [difficulty.] I think being seen in different settings has (.)

R. 17	Mm=
Jess 18 19 20	=had a big, a big impact, not just in schools but I think erm (.1) with more partnership work going on, more multiagency work going on, we're, we're with other professionals
R. 21	Mm
Jess 22 23	and I think that they're starting to see you know we're not stuck away in clubs any more or=
R. 24 Jess 25 26 27	= [Mm] = [walking] the streets on a Friday night any more, You know, we are involved in, in more partnership arrangements and it's (.1) it's becoming more obvious that we do have a clear role
Jess 28 R. 29	= [and] = [Mm]
Jess 30	= we are professional (.1)
R. 31	Mm
Jess 32	and I think we fought against that for a long time (.3)
R. 33	You think youth workers them-
Jess 34 R. 35 Jess 36 37	= [yea] = [-selves] have fought against it? = = yea I do think so I think we've been (.) quite low down in the hierarchy of professionals for quite some time, that's just my own (.1)
R. 38	Mmm
Jess 39 40 41	perception but erm (.1) yea, I think, I think we (.1) we do have opportunities now. I don't know how much of it is because of (.1) targeted work and measured work
R. 42	Mm (.2)
Jess 43 44	and I wouldn't like to think it's just because we can measure our outcomes because (.3) I don't think we do anything differently than we have done (.)
R. 45	Mm
Jess 46	I think it's just about how that is recognised and how we can present that
R. 47	(.2) Mm (.5) Mm
Interview, question 3, 'the here and now realities for youth workers'; 711_0047, 17.47-19.14	

This sequence of data represents just one sample of Jessica's reflections on professional youth work. It begins with Jessica referring to "age-old" (lines 1, 14) difficulties youth workers encounter in showing the difference their practice can make in young lives, before she moves on to explain how partnering with other agencies in different settings is having "a big, big impact" (line 18). Jessica draws her story together by asserting that youth work has not changed (line 44) but needs to focus on how it is recognised and presented to others. That this is clearly the endpoint of her speech is shown by the increasingly lengthy pauses around the listening "mms" in line 47. Moreover, it was interesting to note that her closing remarks appeared to echo Andy's view (in extract five) of the need for greater recognition and representation of the value of youth work in other arenas.

The presence of the listener's "mms" was a recurring discursive feature in this sequence of talk. They were clearly audible on replaying the audio-recording and increasingly visible on annotating the transcript for discursive analysis. It is believed that 'mms' act as useful "minimal responses" (Geldard and Geldard, 2008, 104) to demonstrate listening, though their overuse can be distracting (ibid). In this extract, several "mms" appear to predict the trajectory of Jessica's talk for the "mm" can be seen to intersect and overlap with Jessica's words (see, for example, lines 6-9 and lines 14-17). There is an interesting inversion of this overlapping and latched talk when Jessica intersects with my question (lines 33-36), with a promptness that implies confidence in her point of view.

Throughout, Jessica adopts an inclusive style of talk by using "we" to refer to the youth work community and then articulates her own views through the use of "I think" on many occasions. Jessica's opinion that youth workers have resisted being seen as professional (line 32) trigger a question from me, implying it was an unexpected turn in the discourse and this became a point of interest in my analysis. Discursively, it appeared that as I reprised her remarks into a question using the 'third person' of speech, I was positioning myself at some critical distance from those 'fighting in the past against being seen as professional' that may have disturbed my own professional biography and identity. The impact of our 'troubled' interaction at this juncture (lines 32-36) also influenced the design of Jessica's subsequent talk for it led her to expand upon her view of youth workers resisting professional status by referring to their position as "quite low down in the hierarchy of professionals for some time" (lines 36-37), then hedging it, saying, "that's just my own perception" (lines 37, 39). Later she uses more pauses in her speech that imply some hesitancy as she brings her narration to a close.

Further discursive scrutiny around the 'troubled interaction' drew attention to its relationship to the preceding dialogue (lines 16-20; 25-30). Jessica's remarks about youth workers resisting professional status were actually part of a longer sequence of talk that could fit depictions of "co-located" patterns of talk (Gee, 2014b, 164). Interpreting Jessica's talk in this way brings out its different meanings. It represents her actual 'conversational turn' as being designed to show youth work on a more positive professional footing compared to its past, a position that she argued could be seen in the increasing visibility of youth work roles in partnership work being undertaken with professional colleagues in different settings. Making sense of Jessica's remarks in this way appears to afford her with a "progressive narrative" trajectory that fits into the typology of a coherent "stability identity" (Gergen, 1994, 253-4) across the data sequence.

Conclusion

Constructing this chapter to address the fourth research question on the discursive and linguistic attributes of youth workers' professional talk has proved an interesting exercise for it

has provided intriguing glimpses of the judicious choice of syntax and semantics that were used not only to convey meaning but also to produce dynamic representations of social identities in the discourse. The speakers came across as socially adept at using linguistic devices, rhetorical speech and humour to communicate ideas, draw in their audience and deal with the research context. Through their social interaction with each other, (and with the researcher as the annotated transcripts show), different youth work identities were enacted. They included those of being a reflective practitioner, educator and advocate as well as representations of those who were sensitive to young people's needs and clearly counted it a "privilege" to be working with them (extract 2, line 21) and have the opportunity to make a difference in young lives (extract 2, lines 23-24; extract 8, line 21).

It was also evident that youth workers were designing their talk to introduce other voices into their narration which could produce dialogical interaction that then served to consolidate particular identities. Among these voices were those representing young people (extract 3, line 17; extract 4, lines 2-4) as well as those exercising governance over services (extract 2, lines 11-12). Thus, one worker used the mix of young and adult voices to construct his intermediary role as an advocate (extract 3), while others used those of government (extract 5, lines 29; 39-40) as a counterpoint to the professional youth work identity. Another youth worker designed his conversational turn to represent the debate within the profession on whether to 'fight the corner' or go along with the managerial agenda (extract 5), a sequence of talk that brought his own youth work stance more clearly in view. Some speakers also reproduced their internalised reflections in order to create dialogical interaction (see extract 4, lines 19, 21, 23) and manifest a youth work identity in the complexity of inter-professional relationships. Some of their most prevalent discourses are summarised on table 23 overleaf.

The discursive analysis of extracts of data has shown participants' active engagement in the research enterprise. It was displayed in the way they often mirrored each other's linguistic style of speaking in the design of their conversational 'turn', in the frequent use of response tokens (the 'yeas' and 'mms') that facilitated the discussion and in the way views were reframed for this audience of peers. More than one contribution by different participants suggested commonly-held views on the professional disposition of youth workers and its limited recognition in public circles. Moreover, the many references to being 'professional' suggest that at stake here was peer affirmation as a legitimate member of this professional community. As such, the corpus of data has produced some persuasive representations of the complexities of life inside the youth work community of practice.

Table 23: Pervasive discourses across the selected discursive extracts

A change in professional positioning

from
Being 'the poor relation' (extract 2)

and

'quite low down in the hierarchy of professionals for quite some time' (extract 6)

to
'now we are seen more and more as a profession' (extract 2)

and

'I think we do have opportunities now' (extract 6)

Still occupying the middle ground

'just somewhere in-between the young person and you know whoever the other side is' (extract 3)

with, on the one hand,

'the authorities' & 'local services' & 'fitting into their box' (extracts 2, 3, 4 & 5)

and on the other

'being an informal educator' in a 'voluntary relationship with young people' (extracts 2 & 7)

Moving on from difficulties of

'We can evaluate a session but we can't evaluate the impact that's going to have on a young person's life' (extract 6)

and

serendipitously receiving feedback

'that residential changed my life' *and* 'this is how we can change lives, this is how we can inspire' (extract 8)

To the nub of the matter and ability to say

'This is what we do, this is how we do it and this is why it is good'" (extract 5)

and

"It's just about how that is recognised and how we can present that" (extract 6)

Note: extracts 1-6 appear in chapter 7, extracts 7-8 are in appendix 15

Chapter 8 Discussion of Findings

The impact of austerity and changing organisational practices contextualised and framed this study from its inception. The youth workers found these circumstances to be a source of tension as their traditional youth work practices were constrained to fit into models of managerialism where precedence was usually given to economic factors rather than humanistic values. That these findings were not unique to this study could be seen by triangulating this data to other sources where the parlous state of youth work funding (House of Commons ESC, 2011a; Butler, 30.4.2013; Unison, 2014) and the debilitating effects of the managerial drive for targeting and outcome measures (Davies and Merton, 2009; Hughes et al., 2014), were creating huge challenges for the youth work profession. This corpus of data portrays the youth workers' understanding of these professional realities and the issues facing young people and, in so doing, offers descriptions of youth work practice that appear to navigate this difficult terrain. Moreover, through their animated talk of practice, the youth workers have provided a nuanced view from the 'frontline' of youth work at this time.

This chapter is structured to consider these findings through the lens of the research questions, before moving on to weigh up the merits of the research methodology. Overall, the approach to the findings has been informed by arguments for their "plausibility" and "credibility" in order to justify claims for their "validity" (Hammersley, 1998, 67).

8.1 Sub-identities contributing to the professional identity of youth workers

The research findings generated by thematic and discursive analyses show that personal, professional and political experiences are significant factors in the construction of the youth workers' professional identity. These three strands of the professional self are discussed below in terms of:-

- 'Finding the personal in the professional', which is expressed through 'being shaped by biography'; 'personal investment in learning and development' and 'having passion for youth work';

- 'Maintaining the professional self in youth work practice', which is expressed through 'being an ethical practitioner'; 'being professional'; 'being an active listener and advocate' and 'facilitating learning and informal education';

- 'Making sense of personal and professional selves in the political context', which is expressed through 'managing the managerial interface' and 'principled infidelity'; 'marginal positioning' and 'gate-keeping the field'.

Table 24 structures these sub-identities for discussion and points to examples of relevant data that substantiates these findings.

Table 24: Findings on Research Question 1: Sub-identities contributing to the professional identity of youth workers			
	Sub-identities	**Theme**	**Sample of data relevant to this finding**
	'Finding the personal in the professional'		
8.1.1	Being shaped by biography	YWID1A & 1B	Jason, T. p.52; Carl, T. YWID2D, p.57; Andy, T. p.90; Sophie & Scott, App.12, YWID1B.
8.1.2	Personal investment in learning and development	YWID1D & 2E	Ed, T. p.54; Ben, T. p.63; Alistair, T. p.92; Group, T., 7.1 extract, p.97-8.
8.1.3	Having passion for youth work	YWID6D	Alistair, T. p.52; Greg, T. p.59; Carl, T. p.68; Ben, App.12, YWID3E; Andy, App.13, YWID6D.
	'Maintaining the professional self in youth work practice'		
8.1.4	Being an ethical practitioner	YWID2A B, C & D	Jessica, T. p.57; Greg, T. p.93 (2 quotations); Katherine, App.12, YWID2C; Helen & Greg, App.13, YWID5E.
8.1.5	Being professional	YWID2F 3D & 4D	Greg, T. p.59; Ben, T. p.64; Helen, T. p.64-5; Ed, T. p.74; Sophie, T. p.76; Jessica, T. p.93; Nicola & Jason, App.12, YWID2F.
8.1.6	Being an active listener & advocate	YWID3F	Andy, T. p.65; Sophie, T. p.76; Group, T., 7.3 extract, p.102-3; Jade & Philip, App.12, YWID3F.
8.1.7	Facilitating learning and informal education	YWID3C & 4D	Peter, T. p.63; Jason, T. p.74; Katherine & Nicola, App.12, YWID3C; Philip, App. 13, YWID4E; Group, App. 15, extract 7.
	'Making sense of personal and professional selves in the political context'		
8.1.8	Managing the managerial interface & principled infidelity	YWID5A B,C,D,E	Jade, T. p.79; Ben & Helen, T. p.79; Jason T. p.82; Greg, T. p.83; Victoria & Jason, App.13, YWID5D.
8.1.9	Marginal positioning	YWID6A	Helen, T. p.72; Nicola, T. p.84-5; Jade, T. p.88; Ben, T. p.88.
8.1.10	Gatekeeping the field	YWID6B	Jason and Andy, T. p.86; Group, T., 7.5 extract, p.108-9; Helen, App.13, YWID5E; Helen & Ben, App.13, YWID6B.
Key to data index in right-hand column: Data source: Name of speaker or group T. Thesis and page reference App. Appendix number and YWID thematic code			

These findings are discussed in detail below and supported by references to data cited in earlier chapters. These references are located by following the citation in brackets, such as 'Andy, T. p.90' (which refers to a quotation by Andy, found on page 90 of this thesis); the 'YWID' thematic category (from chapters 5 or 6) or a discursive extract (from chapter 7).

8.1.1 'Being shaped by biography'

The observation that "there's a lot of my own personal history invested in who I am as a youth worker" (Andy, T. p.90) was not an uncommon finding in the data. Taking time to reflect on formative life experiences is often a starting point in professional training whereby students

examine their own culture and beliefs in order to distinguish some of its effects on their lives and avoid imposing it on others in turn. Consequently, when asked in the focus groups to talk about 'becoming a youth worker', the workers were able to reflect on various biographical influences that had shaped their journey into the profession, alluding often to instances of meaningful support that came at difficult stages of their own adolescence and which had led them to want to provide similar forms of support for other young people. Their early contact with youth work was often depicted as uplifting, as they found it rewarding to volunteer or were inspired by supportive mentors who inducted them further into the world of youth work. As the workers spoke, they were incorporating these early experiences into a progressive narrative that was to do with the given endpoint of 'becoming a youth worker'. Inevitably then, such narration involved synthesising their lives in relation to this particular outcome and in doing so, producing constructions of identity as "a work in progress" (Wenger, 1998, 45) and to do with "the meld of personal and professional" (Baxter, 2011, 43). Moreover, it is reasonable to infer that youth workers, like others in reflexive professions, are influenced by their formative life experiences and that similarly appears to be the case here.

8.1.2 'Personal investment in learning and development'

The youth workers' interest in taking up learning opportunities to develop not only their practice but also themselves was a noticeable finding in the data. At an early stage, the learning theme was introduced through the creative metaphor of 'learning to drive' (see 7.1) whereby the workers emerged from professional training to put their newly acquired theories into fieldwork practice. Moreover, this formative learning experience was interpreted as being of substantial personal value for, "it was the benefit, not just in my practice but I felt like I benefitted in life, yea I did" (Ben, 711_0046, 16.35-16.39).

Similar talk of the personal benefits of professional learning implied there was much at stake in learning processes for they could lead to becoming "a better person and a better youth worker hopefully" (Andy, appendix 12, YWID1D). The view that professional training benefits individuals as well as organisations has been widely acknowledged (LGA, 2005; Bowie et al. 2006; NYA, 2014a) and resonates with this data. Some self-interest might be perceived in a commitment to learning and its potential to advance a career; however, being a learner, believing in holistic education for life (YWID2E) and facilitating learning (see 8.1.7) all appeared to underpin youth work theory and practice that was discussed earlier.

The workers' interest in analysing and synthesising practice rather than just recording it, implied commitment to becoming *reflective* practitioners. They were aware that youth work could be both challenging and stressful "because you are in the thick of it" (Ben, T. p.64) so the capacity to reflect and learn from experiences was essential:

> "It's only when you do your reflection or you're talking about it, that you will see it and you can appreciate the mistakes you made and I did and you'll never make them again or you'd hope you wouldn't" (Nicola, 711_0053, 18.34-18.51).

Moreover, taking part in this research was interpreted as another opportunity to reflect on and analyse practice - "Great to sit and chat and reflect and be challenged by like-minded people" (feedback, appendix 16) - while another participant believed that "any opportunity to speak to someone else about what we do, I think is beneficial for both" (Jessica, 711_0051, 07.52-07.59) and was intending to share the research questions with team colleagues to see what they might have said. In going forward, the interviewees still appeared to feel motivated, as they spoke of their plans to take higher degrees, write a book or reflect further on their own contribution to the sector. Overall, the data was arguably demonstrating the learning credentials of a highly-qualified workforce, committed to ongoing development and worthy of professional status.

8.1.3 'Having passion for youth work'

The data resounds with workers' references to feeling passionate about youth work (table 24, 8.1.3). Their enthusiastic sentiments attached to the youth work way of working appeared to correlate to their emotional investment in working with young people, which was seen as fun (see YWID1C) and had variety (YWID3H); and which engendered commitment to humanistic values (Greg, T. p.59) and had the potential to 'change lives' (Ben, appendix 15, extract 8). Being passionate about your work is not unique to youth work but it is a spirit that was attested to elsewhere in the literature, (for example, see LSE, 2015; de St Croix, 2013). The data also showed that workers' enthusiasm could wane at times as they were confronted by troubling work situations with young people (for example, see Ben, T. p.64) or market-driven work practices (see 8.1.8). Despite these challenges, the underlying discourse of feeling passionate about youth work continued to make its presence felt as Davies had similarly found in his earlier inquiry into the state of youth work (Davies, 2010, 28).

8.1.4 'Being an ethical practitioner'

Another noteworthy finding was the prominence of youth work values and ethical practice in the youth workers' conversations. These principles - building voluntary relationships, enabling participation, sharing power and addressing equal opportunities - appeared integral to youth work practice and construction of their professional identity. This emphasis on the 'ethical' component of identity was similarly noted by Baxter (2011) who defined it as "comprising core beliefs about what it means to be a professional within that context" (ibid, 54). Despite expressing belief in their youth work principles, workers appeared to struggle to maintain them in prescriptive work contexts where targeting and outcome measures appeared to flourish and

the valuing of professional expertise diminish. The data shows workers were making compromises (see Carl, T. p.57, YWID2C; Andy, T. p.108-9) in order to retain their footing in practice situations and the emotion attached to such choices, particularly expressed by Andy, implied that these were contentious issues that could detract from the authentic youth work persona of an ethical practitioner.

8.1.5 'Being professional'

The complex 'being professional' persona is defined here in terms of demonstrating the skills and knowledge of professional youth work and in following ethical codes of practice appropriate to the workplace context. In addition, it was associated with being trustworthy and reliable, having the ability to manage oneself and others in unpredictable practice situations that might arise as workers responded to the diverse needs of those they met in their working week. This professional disposition embodying interpersonal skills and 'conscious use of self' (Dewane, 2005) in practice, was visible in the data when Ed donned a tie for youth work in school to avoid being typecast as "a slob" and thereby deemed unprofessional (Ed, T. p.74) and in Sophie's use of professional expertise to intervene on behalf of an excluded young man to affirm his progress and enable him to participate (table 18).

Invariably, the corpus of data showed staunch support for "flexibility, creativity and professionalism" (Jessica, T. p.64) in the professional persona of youth workers. Moreover, these were not just occasional episodes in the narratives of practice. Instead, there were numerous examples of flexible youth work responses with youth workers invoking "the blitz spirit" (Carl, T. p.78) to manage funding shortfalls or offering long-term support to a young woman dealing with "massive" issues (Victoria, T. p.56) or managing the complexity of inter-agency collaboration on a housing estate (Greg, YWID4C). Frequently, the workers appeared to be prioritising 'occupational professionalism' above 'organisational professionalism' (Evetts, 2009) which was discussed earlier (see page 9). Given the amorphous nature of the professional construct in the data, common features of this 'occupational professionalism' appeared to be its ethical motivation; acting in young people's interests; being proactive and then, more broadly, conforming to work protocols and practices that were not untypical of other professional disciplines.

8.1.6 'Being an active listener and advocate'

Listening to young people was portrayed as a core activity in youth work practice. Arguably, 'being a listener' is not untypical among those who espouse the 'people' professions, but was omnipresent in these youth work accounts. It underpinned relationships in which youth workers provided support through bereavement (Jason, T. p.52), picked up on young people's issues neglected elsewhere (Helen, T. p.72; Jade, appendix 12, YWID3F), acted as advocates

(Ed, 7.3) and provided a listening ear that replicated generational roles (Jason, T. p.65). These illustrations of practice were to do with 'active listening' rather than 'therapeutic counselling' (Pope, 2016b), and Spence et al.'s similar valuing of listening (2006, 70-1; 135) emphasises how necessary it is, given recent institutional failures to listen to young people in child abuse scandals (Casey, 2015). An alternative view of listening as tokenism to pacify young people comes from Taylor (1987) who has argued instead for radical action to redress the imbalance of power. Nevertheless, this data suggests that as youth workers listen and advocate, they are not only providing support to young people but helping to articulate young people's point of view into arenas where power resides.

8.1.7 'Facilitating learning and informal education'

The data furnishes many examples of youth workers' interest in education for life (YWID2E) and facilitating learning (YWID3C) in youth projects and more formal education settings. Noticeably, schools appeared to appreciate some of the youth work contributions to P.E. and P.S.H.E. classes (Scott, appendix 13, YWID4D; Jason, T. p.74), where their informal learning practices could enhance the school and college curriculum. The commitment to learning and informal education permeates not only these youth workers' accounts of practice but also the youth work literature (Jeffs and Smith, 1996; Mahoney, 2001; NYA, 2013). The youth worker's ability to create learning in some unexpected places was apparent in Philip's account of dealing with 'booted out' fence panels (Philp, appendix 13, YWID4E), which he saw as a learning opportunity for those involved whereas the management committee's point of view was that these young people should be barred from the project because of their apparently bad behaviour. For Philip, with his focus on 'where is the learning', his intervention was to do with helping young people mend their fences in more ways than one for it reinstated young people back into the situation. Such a case represents a vibrant construction of youth work in which the youth worker is positioned in the middle ground, facilitating young people's learning from experience and avoiding their potential exclusion from a service that may be able to support them in the future. Moreover, as a socially-constructed narrative, it brings to light the youth work point of view and in doing so, generates knowledge of what it means to be a professional youth worker in this context.

8.1.8 'Managing the managerial interface' and 'principled infidelity'

In the maelstrom arising from funding cuts and implementation of managerial practices, the youth worker's professional identity appeared to be under threat (see YWID5C, YWID5D and YWID5E). Noticeably, these youth workers expressed frustration over the prevalence of marketing and accountability agendas (Andy, appendix 13, YWID5C) that were exerting tighter managerial control over their practice and minimising the exercise of professional autonomy

and expertise (Ben, appendix 13, YWID6B). This was not, admittedly, unique to youth work but appeared to be part of a general trend in the professions, as was reported elsewhere (Portelli, 2013; Johnson, 2017).

For many of these youth workers, the managerial focus on achieving particular outcomes with certain young people that was satisfying government agendas or specific funding criteria was interpreted as disrupting their responsive, voluntary relationships with young people in open access provision that aimed to provide 'education for life' (Nicola and Carl, appendix 12, YWID2E). Subsequently, youth workers appeared to be manoeuvring their way through these professional-managerial tensions, and 'managing the managerial interface' by following their youth work principles and values, and taking actions that Hoyle and Wallace (2005, 2009) have characterised as 'principled infidelity'. As such, these workers were prioritising professional values over managerial tasks in their work with young people, by, according to Greg, "doing what is right for the individual and not necessarily what the agency wants me to do" (711_0026), as he reflected on difficulties arising from the mismatch between some organisational expectations and professional values.

The data thus affords ample evidence of youth workers following their principles and engaging in such acts of 'principled infidelity' that derive from their understanding and commitment - firstly, to young people's needs and well-being and, secondly, to the traditions and values of the professional community of practice. This commitment arises from youth workers' in-depth knowledge of young people's issues (as demonstrated in YWID3A) and which has been acquired through their relationships with young people in the community. Moreover, youth workers appear to be 'anchored' (see 2.4) by their understanding of the 'art and science' of youth work, by knowing how to implement values into practice and by their ability to draw on their own professional experience of 'what works'. These are not fixed but organic forms of knowledge, and making sense of these elements often leads to devising suitably tailored and timely responses that might not necessarily fit into expected forms of measurable practice in prescribed settings.

Arguably then, these 'principled' actions arose from workers' reflexive thinking and using reflection-in-action to respond to changing needs and realities. Frequently, it involved being pragmatic and improvising in new situations, but also, it could be seen to be about forging new alliances and managing professional boundaries. Examples of this range of 'principled infidelity' activity are considered further below.

Sophie, for instance, appeared to show reflection-in-action as she mediated between the differing parties in the practice situation that was excluding one young man (table 18). Here, she appeared to have heard and empathised with the young man's point of view about his

situation, interpreting it in terms of natural justice and creating a pathway for his inclusion with those in authority. Her actions can be understood in terms of a pragmatic intervention. In fact, there were many examples of youth workers responding to young people's perceived needs and taking up advocacy roles to redress the balance of power. As they did so, they were thus repositioning young people, not as problems or passive victims but as partners, deserving of equal consideration in the process (see YWID3F, 7.3 and 8.1.6).

Moreover, the data portrayed youth workers standing up for their profession as they advocated for their own ethical ways of working. They pointed out the incompatibility of some Youth Star outcome measures being unilaterally imposed in professional settings (in detached youth work, Andy, T. p.81; in voluntary youth projects, Jade, T. p.81-2) as it could undermine the youth work relationship between the young person and youth worker. Instead, they sought to change the conversation, drawing attention to meaningful learning experiences for young people that countered the emphasis on narrow numerical measures of success. They offered lucid explanations of youth work roles in terms of being an educator, facilitator or listener, providing examples of practice in which the value base was clearly visible. They were also concerned with 'gatekeeping the field' to separate youth work from some of the poor work practices that were going on with young people. In fact, it was suggested that the de-professionalization trend was leaving the sector feeling a bit like "the wild west" (Jason, appendix 13, YWID6C), creating a situation where shortcuts might be taken and some organisations might manipulate the figures or embellish feedback to secure funding, as was reportedly happening in some big companies elsewhere[11] (Ben, 711_0045).

Subtle forms of resistance at the micro-level permeated the data, with workers navigating their way around existing constraints. Amongst such incidents, Carl could be seen re-creating the context for voluntary relationships (Carl, T. p.57, YWID2C), Jessica was holding the line in the school-setting (Jessica, T. p.57), Andy was maintaining a drop-in at the school over the academic year (Andy, T. p.62) and Ben and Helen showed their capacity for improvisation because "everyone has worked out how to get stuff" (Ben, Helen, T. p.79). As workers were adapting to realities on the ground, their roles were becoming more ambiguous, fitting earlier depictions of fluid professional identities.

Critics of youth workers might seek an alternative explanation of this implied resistance to widespread incorporation of managerial practices. They might draw attention to youth workers' substantial personal, social and economic investment in sustaining their profession as indicating a reluctance to change with the times. However, such a view might be countered by considering professional youth work's inclusive, participatory and empowering practices with

[11] Note, no instances of any such illicit actions by youth workers were disclosed to this researcher

marginalised groups in society, its ethical value base that accords with core principles attested to in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), as well as its capacity to innovate in response to need. Indeed, these youth workers often appeared to be exploring new avenues to develop their practice, as when Victoria took time to establish a relationship with the local police custody suite in order to reach out to young people in trouble with the law (Victoria, T. p.62), or when Helen drew down new sources of funding in entrepreneurial partnership work with local sports co-ordinators and schools that established dance classes for young men (Helen, T. p.75).

Despite such developments, these youth workers remained conscious of the vulnerability of their situation. It was argued that it was difficult to show open resistance to managerial changes because dissenting voices could be "wheedled out the back door" (Andy, T. 7.5) and several senior workers were pragmatically no longer openly "fighting the corner" (ibid); instead they were overtly complying and subversively doing the 'real' youth work, "guerrilla style in the background" (ibid).

Nevertheless, the numerous small acts of resistance to dominant discourses implied behind-the-scenes activity to defend the profession, its values and ways of working in inclement times. Moreover, as Thomas and Davies (2005) theorised in analysing 'the micro-politics of resistance', these were nuanced responses to power relations in organisational contexts. Further research into the intricacies of subjectivities and power dynamics in discourses of resistance amongst youth workers could provide more insight into the nature of this phenomenon.

8.1.9 'Marginal positioning'

Despite having confidence in their professional craft, youth workers often found themselves marginalised by those who did not share their understanding of the nature of youth work (YWID4A) and its potential contribution to young lives. A sense of feeling under-valued was not a new experience for youth workers (Bradford and Cullen, 2014) and this was borne out in the data portraying inter-agency relations (YWID4B) where some youth workers felt they were seen as "*just*[12] youth workers" (Helen, T. p.72; Nicola, T. p.84-5) or left out of the loop in the exchange of information (Ben, T. p.72). Moreover, being side-lined contributed to feeling like "the poor relation" (Nicola, 7.2), a sensation that was reinforced by the funding crisis in youth and community services (YWID5B).

The data suggests that youth workers were not marginal figures in some young people's lives, particularly when the workers were providing support and representing their interests (8.1.6),

[12] Italics have been added to reflect speaker emphasis

and moreover, at times, deftly manoeuvring around funding shortfalls and restrictive organisational practices (8.1.8) in order to sustain their relationships with young people. However, at the national level, the limited recognition of professional youth work in the Coalition government's youth policy coupled with the government's promotion of the National Citizen Service and volunteering (Bradford and Cullen, 2014, 95-6), appeared to diminish their role and reinforce the youth workers' sense of being seen as minor players in services for young people (YWID6C).

8.1.10 'Gatekeeping the field'

The 'professional' thread permeating the data showed youth workers protecting their professional credentials and resisting efforts to de-professionalise their work. As discussed earlier, the youth workers often alluded to their personal investment in this professional role (8.1.1, 8.1.2, 8.1.3) and their espousal of youth work principles in ethical practice (8.1.4), both of which were contributing to their 'professional' identity (8.1.5). They appeared to be 'gatekeeping' their professional ways of working and were conscious of the difficulties that might arise from increasing reliance on unqualified or unsupervised ancillary staff in services for young people, for it might mean young people were being put at risk as well as the community of practice being brought into disrepute (Andy, T. p.83; YWID6B, YWID6C).

A view of youth workers making a stand to defend their youth work principles and practices was supported in the youth work literature (In Defence of Youth Work website; Nicholls, 2012) and, moreover, found echoes across many other disciplines that were similarly addressing concerns over de-professionalizing practices (Randall and Kindiak, 2008; Menter, 2009; Thompson, 2012).

8.2 The professional knowledge used by youth workers

Making a success of initial contact and relationship-building with young people and others in the community was underpinned by theoretical knowledge and the ability to put theory into practice. The data provided plausible evidence of the presence of these forms of knowledge that were underpinning professional youth work. They included having a firm grasp of theories of adolescence, needs-analysis, communication, management, models of intervention, learning theories, ethical codes of practice, critical analysis and knowledge of youth work approaches in different settings (such as detached youth work). Moreover, knowledge of self was recognised as important too, both in becoming a reflective practitioner (see 8.1.2) and by being able to make conscious use of self (see 8.1.5) in practice situations.

The youth workers showed they understood young people were facing the "challenges of adolescence", the stress of exams amid other people's "incredibly high" expectations of them

as well as problems arising from online technology that left some "socially isolated" (YWID3A; also see Jessica and Victoria, appendix 12, YWID3A). Acquiring this knowledge of what mattered to these young people was ably demonstrated by Jade (see YWID3A and appendix 12, YWID3F), whose listening approach showed emotional literacy as she recognised firstly, that the young people's anger was a reaction to family breakdown and secondly, she gave them some power back by "not talk(ing) over them", which began to address some of the inequity in the power dynamics of their current situation. Further examples of youth workers applying their skills and knowledge came through in descriptions of roles facilitating learning; being a listener, advocate or group worker; in managing staff, administration and projects as well as juggling the diversity of work situations that could arise in the working week - (YWID3B-YWID3H). Nevertheless, the data also suggests some agencies were still reluctant to draw on youth work professional expertise and knowledge and appeared preoccupied with their own work place priorities and challenges (YWID4B-4D).

8.3 Examples of practice that provide evidence of the value of youth work

"Value is not necessarily money, it is measured in all sorts of things" (Carl, 711_0023, 19.13 - 19.18). Identifying what constitutes youth work of value is a contested terrain and one in which grassroots workers appear to have little say or control. The data suggested that many youth workers were being directed towards quantifiable performance outcomes that held little resemblance to individual needs of young people and youth work values (see YWID5C and YWID5D). Nevertheless, it appeared that youth workers were finding their way through such conundrums, as they referred to their examples of practice that were changing young people's attitudes or increasing their resilience (Jason, T. p.82; see also Andy, appendix 13, YWID4E) and which, moreover, were being endorsed by young people where their feedback was available - given that its full value often only emerged at a later stage (Jessica, 7.6; Philip, 711_0023; Ben, appendix 15, extract 8). Further descriptions of youth work of value also appear in examples of 'practice wisdom' (YWID4E) that were discussed earlier in the main body of the thesis.

Sometimes, youth work of value was being attested to in other professional settings, including schools, as when Scott introduced 'Panna Cage Football' (Scott, appendix 13, YWID4D), Jason led sexual health education classes (Jason, T. p.74), Helen developed dance classes for young men (Helen, T. p.75) and Jessica helped a young woman learn how to be a good friend (Jessica, appendix 13, YWID6D). In addition, it has to be stated that youth workers practising ethically was part of the value of their work. It might be expected that this should have been taken-for-granted in good practice but, nevertheless, it is worth affirming that these workers appeared to profess a mind-set committed to safe-guarding and respecting young

people, that could easily be contrasted with the trying realities of poor ethical practice that they noted elsewhere (Sophie, 7.4; Greg, appendix 13, YWID5E) and their dismay with over-sexualised dance work with young women (Helen, appendix 13, YWID5E). The constant references to ethical practice arguably demonstrate that this is a significant part of their professional ethos and enmeshed in their ideas of youth work of value.

A closer look at some cases of effective practice encrypted as 'saving lives' (Nicola, T. p.66) and 'changing lives' (Victoria, T. p.56; Ben, appendix 15, extract 8) provide opportunities to weigh the quality of the evidence. Nicola's 'saving lives' story brought to light a youth worker's abilities to respond well in a crisis. In her words, "I'm not being dramatic, [it] has happened and has happened on my project; in fact it happened last week with another project" (Nicola, 711_0056, 01.48-01.56) triggered my interview prompt "what happened?" which then led into her recounting the story of the young woman at the bus stop, that had been related to her by a colleague. As such, it was an anecdotal account of a critical incident and not one Nicola witnessed, even though she stated she had encountered such situations herself. Moreover, as the story unfolded, Nicola was constructing arguments to show the lack of recognition of the professional youth work response, which, if it had been an intervention by a more public figure such as a government minister, would have been - "headline news, minister saves life of young girl, but it's not; it's what we do for a living…it's a very caring profession and it's not recognised" (ibid, 03.33-03.51). This 'saving lives' incident could not be considered as an everyday event as it might be for paramedics and so is neither a 'representative' nor 'deviant' episode but nevertheless could still be construed in terms of 'making a significant difference' in a young person's life and supporting the point of view that the value of youth work often receives little recognition elsewhere.

The 'changing lives' examples of practice include some of Victoria's and Ben's memorable experiences of youth work they valued. Victoria's investment of "a lot of time…over a very long time" in support of one young woman with serious mental health issues, who was self-harming and dependent on drugs and alcohol paid off as, in due course, the young woman relinquished her addictions and re-entered education and took up volunteering where she "does public speaking in front of hundreds of people and this was a young woman who couldn't even look me in the eye when she first met me" (Victoria, 711_0037). By contrast, Ben's example of the young man saying "that residential changed my life" (711_0043) - which was feedback he received a year after the event - implied both the value of residential experiences but also the limitations of trying to determine success at the time when the real meaning of an experience might only be captured as a young person's life unfolds. Taking the long view applies similarly to Victoria's narrative, in which she made a point of contextualising the young woman's development in terms of the passage of time. These are plausible explanations of the difficulty

of short-term methods of measuring service value. Moreover, it substantiates a view that determining service value requires qualitative evidence to describe professional nuances and explain the impact of practice. In this study, evidence of youth work of value has been deemed to reside in youth workers' engaging in ethical practices, managing critical incidents, investing time in relationships and providing learning and support that has enabled young people to flourish and move on.

8.4. How youth workers make sense of and construct accounts of their professional practice

In this section, participants' dialogical and discursive practices presented in chapter 7 (and appendix 15) are further reviewed. These data sequences involved twelve of the seventeen participating youth workers and also portrayed interaction with the researcher. There was ample evidence of participants using both conventional speech patterns as well as the professional vocabulary pertaining to this community of practice. Noteworthy, too, was the deployment of 'ventrioloquation' whereby participants introduced other voices into their narratives that served both to amplify the storyline and position the youth worker in the unfolding discourse on practice. This section then closes by discussing the effects of the researcher's presence on the data, the value of the discursive lens and the social constructive nature of the findings.

Firstly, the transcripts of discursive extracts make it clear that participants use many familiar features of everyday talk to discuss their practice and expound their youth work point of view. The transcripts portray the youth workers following the speech conventions of 'turn-taking' and 'three-part lists', using metaphors and irony as well as 'repairs' and 'pauses' to create emphasis and describe their experiences. These familiar linguistic and communication skills serve to make the accounts more accessible to the general listener (and reader).

Secondly, it was noticed that participants included a more specialised vocabulary to talk about their practice but continued to express themselves in the same conventional patterns of speech. This finding differs from that put forward by Spence et al. (2006) that "everyday language is inevitably different from discussion about practice" (page 40). On the evidence of the data transcripts, the workers are clearly still using conventional speech acts as they talk of 'informal' or 'social education', 'voluntary relationship', 'participation', facilitating 'learning' or being 'passionate' about youth work. The workers' ability to speak in detail about the intricacies of their roles was apparent, as could be seen in Helen's reflections on facilitating and managing groups (Helen, 711_0014, T. p.64-5 and in appendix 12, YWID3E).

Talking with their peers, the youth workers portrayed a shared understanding of beliefs and practice traits that resonated not only with the youth work literature but also professional youth work training programmes. Arguably, through their spirited commitment to "a set of shared

norms" (Labov, 1972, 120) and use of specific meaningful terms that served as "identity markers" (Baxter, 2011, 23) the youth workers were displaying membership of a 'speech community'. Their practices might vary according to different needs and contexts, but their commitment to these principles and values helped the workers to identify with each other and recognise others where there is "a 'youth workery' kind of thing about people" (Jessica, appendix 12, YWID2A). In these terms, it suggests both a distinctive yet accessible community of professional practice.

A third finding of interest was the youth workers' aforementioned use of 'ventriloquation' (Bakhtin, 1981) to introduce other voices into their accounts. This can be seen in several of the discursive extracts, when the voices of 'young' people or 'other adults' - managers or colleagues - enter the narrative and function not only as storytelling devices but also appear to shed light on youth work positioning and roles in practice. This possibility prompted closer scrutiny of the ventrioloquation phenomena in the data.

By animating 'young' voices in their narratives, the youth workers had brought young people to the forefront of their stories of practice. But more than this, ventrioloquation appeared to be a tool to show youth workers taking account of young people's concerns and taking action to improve their situation. These 'young' voices were often contributing to the construction of advocacy roles where the youth worker was positioned in the middle ground, trying to build bridges between young people and those on the other side, (see Ed, 7.3). Also, when some of the 'other adult' voices were deployed in speakers' stories, as in Philip's account of police and local residents criticising young people (Philip, appendix 12, YWID3F) or Sophie's account of managers' feedback after she successfully argued for the fair treatment of a young man on a trip to Alton Towers (table 18), these voices were once again contributing to a story arc that orientated youth workers into becoming advocates for young people. By doing so, they exemplified Davies and Harré's view (1990) that the dynamics of positioning lead to the production of particular identities for such situations.

Noticeably, the corpus of data includes examples of 'other adult' voices positioning youth workers in deteriorating situations such as when those in authority managing resources are attributed with, "I will get rid of the non-statutory because, you know, what are they" (Nicola, 7.2). In another example, this time from professional colleagues who are responding to different youth work agendas, the argument is in terms of "let's fit into the square box" (Andy, 7.5), which again presents a reductive model of youth work practice. Thus, it appears plausible to interpret ventriloquation as a discursive practice that not only creates dialogue but is being used here to position youth workers differently within other discourses on 'youth'. It appears that as youth workers make their discursive moves to represent young people's interests, they

become separated from the mainstream of public discourses that problematize youth. Moreover, not only are limits placed on young people's power over their own affairs but others, such as youth workers who are working directly with young people, have little say over controlling managerial practices or resources for their work.

In contrast, it was interesting to see the appearance of a 'young' voice giving feedback on the value of a youth work experience. The youth worker relayed the young man's remarks -"that residential changed my life" (Ben, appendix 15, extract 8), which, though positive and meaningful to both the young man and the youth worker, were nevertheless given in a format and at a time (a year later) that would not easily be represented within the constraints of existing quantitative frameworks of accountability.

Given this array of discursive findings, I wanted to reflect on my own contribution to the discursive practices that had emerged in the data. My interest in the nature of youth work conversations was of long-standing and had triggered the fourth research question on youth workers' dialogical interaction. Previously, I had noticed youth workers usually spoke carefully about their relationship with young people in order to avoid being seen as exploiting them for other purposes. An endorsement of this point of view appeared to be borne out by one pithy exchange in which a youth work witness challenged the committee chair person's talk of 'using' young people[13] in the Education Select Committee Hearings into Services for Young People in 2011. Thus encouraged, I included a research question on the language of youth work in this research study.

To my surprise, in one interview, I heard one youth worker speak of 'using' a young woman in a situation (711_0027, 13.22) and this led me to ask him to clarify the meaning of his words in this context. I was troubled by his way of speaking about this young woman and this created an ethical quandary for me, feeling caught between wanting to be detached and avoid unduly influencing the data yet wanting to challenge the oppressive use of such language (as I did here). I was conscious that this youth worker's way of speaking was not uncommon in the general population (as the committee chairman above had proved) and so my reaction could be considered as just quibbling over semantics. This led to my taking a more pragmatic stance to avoid coercing the interviewee to agree with me and subsequently I minimalized some of my interactions in remaining interviews to avoid what might be construed as over-zealous contamination of the data. It was an interaction that served as a reminder to distinguish between data expectations and data realities and the nuances of researcher positioning in qualitative research. Later on, this episode, though of some interest in constructing my own

[13] House of Commons, Minutes of Evidence, 9 February 2011, Exchange between witness and chairperson over question 84 (House of Commons SEC, 2011c)

research and youth work identities, was not selected amongst the discursive extracts as it did not pertain to the wider analysis of discursive features of the data.

The researcher's voice may have been minimalised through that experience but nevertheless continued to be an active presence in the data collection and analysis. It appeared not only in questions that initiated conversations (see 7.1, 7.2) but also through increasingly visible 'mms' that interspersed speech extracts. On reflection, this presence was not quite so neutral as I might have wished for although 'mms' often function as minimal interventions to encourage the speaker and acknowledge listening (Geldard and Geldard, 2008, 104), 'mms' may also be construed as common features of talk that imply agreement or disagreement with the views being expressed (Maynard, 1991; Pomerantz, 1984). Thus, interview extracts that show the 'mms' latching on to the speaker's talk (as in extract 7.6, lines 6-18, also extract 8, lines 30-37), imply my agreement with the speaker's views. This appears an apt explanation of the 'mms', for the youth worker in each case is confirming some of my taken-for-granted understanding of youth work realities. Moreover, in extract two (7.2), the two 'mms' in the three minutes of talk, appear to be attached to the potential of two 'soundbites' – "the poor relation" and the "privilege" of working with young people, thereby implying an awareness that these are noteworthy descriptions of practice. As such these agreeing 'mms' contrast with some tentative 'mms' that appear to express caution and may withhold agreement as evinced by the slight pause in another conversational turn (see extract 7.6, line 38). On the basis of such transcript evidence, it appears that this researcher is not wholly neutral and as such this sits within the realities of qualitative research practice (Johnson, 2014). Furthermore, the audio-recordings and transcripts do provide verifiable evidence of the engagement of researcher and informants with the research process and arguably, testify to the thematic patterns and dialogues in the talk on youth work practice.

Overall, many rewarding insights emerged from the discursive analysis of data. It could be seen that the youth workers were not using a formal style of speech to discuss their profession but drawing on everyday speech patterns and imbuing them with a sense of humour and lively imagery, showing rhetorical dexterity and flair in structuring their talk. Among their memorable contributions was the 'learning to drive' and 'the poor relation' as discussed in chapter 7, as well as other vibrant images percolating the data. Among them too was the alluring analogy of the youth project as 'the beating heart' of the community (711_0045) - an imaginative storytelling construct infused with personification of the youth centre and onomatopoeia as the speaker beat out the 'ba bum, ba bum, ba bum' of heart beats - and which drew on elements of a good ghost story whereby the youth centre acquired its own heartfelt identity.

Applying a discursive lens had brought the thematic findings to life. The construction of conversational turns was not only providing descriptions of youth work practices but also positioning the youth workers in the discourse. Transcripts of the participants' interaction were providing evidence to support claims for the social construction of data and for the validity of the findings. Furthermore, the provision of these data transcripts would allow others to look more closely into the participants' organisation of talk and come to their own view on the meaning of this data. Using more of the CA transcription symbols could have increased the visibility of further discursive features of data such as the variation in pitch and pace of speech and nuances of the responsive 'mms'. However, this would have produced more complex annotation of shorter data extracts, when my research interest was in the extended sequences of data that were generating professional identities and stories of practice. Nevertheless, it suggested that future youth work research, using an approach from the canon of discourse analysis, could open up new ways of studying professional youth work and its relationships with its various stakeholders.

8.5 The position of these findings in comparison with other youth work research

This study, which provides deeper insight into youth work from the professional youth worker's point of view, has some points in common with youth work research by Bernard Davies (IDYW, 2011) and Spence and Devanney (2006). Their approaches were similarly invested in understanding youth work through the eyes of youth workers, who shed light on its value base, educational and improvisational features amongst other practice traits. In the case of Spence et al., their use of multiple research methods with young people and youth workers in fifteen project visits across the UK, described everyday youth work, though they reflected that issues of a more mundane nature or confidential aspects of practice remained hidden from view and that the research presence had an impact on the data (Spence et al., 2006, 15, 17). Davies's editorial approach to twelve stories of youth work practice from across the country, did chart some of the nuances and complexities of youth work professional practice over time.

This present study can however be contrasted with those above in several ways. It used focus groups and semi-structured interviews to gather data on youth work professional identities and practices in the socio-political context of the north-west of England in 2013. Thematic analysis of data produced descriptions and explanations of the youth workers' journeys into youth work, their professional skills and values in practice, the challenges of diminishing funding and managerial practices that were distorting youth work ways of working and their concerns over the future direction of youth work.

The data was further subjected to narrative-discourse analysis that revealed its socially constructive nature, whereby identities were being forged and positions adopted through the

social interaction. Further scrutiny of 'naturally-occurring' features of talk drew attention to everyday speech acts that were creating meaning and to which professional terms familiar to their colleagues were interwoven, language that was bringing the world of youth work into view. The research findings endorse qualitative research as the means of making sense of professional practices and dissent from the trend towards tighter measures of accountability to determine service value that pay little attention to individual needs, social contexts and professional expertise.

8.6 Findings on Methodology

The use of professional networks to recruit voluntary participants and the adherence to a clear set of procedures supports claims for the integrity of the sampling. The demographics of the sample were noted and checked during the analysis but there were no significant differences in relation to gender, age or district across the findings. The recruitment of only qualified youth workers to the research project meant that the focus was retained on the professional youth work voice that is frequently lost in discourses on services for young people. The research design did not include consulting young people but nevertheless some young people's points of view emerged, filtered through the youth workers' talk of practice.

The data collection methods of focus groups and interviews proved appropriate for the purposes of this research study for they elicited a rich corpus of data drawing directly from practising youth workers. Furthermore, the participants' reflections on the research process, suggested that they found the experience stimulating and appreciated having the space and time to reflect on what was happening around them (see appendix 16). Their positive feedback implies that further research with professional practitioners would be well-received and draw out more of the complexities of their professional practice.

Noticeably, this particular sample of youth workers who were working in diverse practice settings across the north-west region were raising similar issues to those identified by other youth work commentators (Davies, 2013; Hughes et al., 2014), thereby implying coherence and consistency across research findings on the youth work experience at this time. Moreover, in 2016, to check the validity of my own findings on the ubiquity of managerial practices and funding shortfalls, I liaised with my professional networks and met two small groups of youth workers (who had no connection with any other part of this research) to discuss my interim research findings (Pope, 2016c, see extract of 'Hitting the ground running – today's youth work realities', appendix 17). These workshops triggered further stories of practice dilemmas arising from reducing funding and increasing managerialism, which made me confident that I was not over-estimating the continuing significance of these issues for the field. Moreover, as I listened to these further accounts of declining funding for youth work in 2016, I learnt of the increasing

emotional toll the economic climate was having on youth workers' morale and hampering their ability to respond fully to young people's needs. It was a discussion that was only occasionally lightened by glimpses of professional resilience in the face of workplace stress and employment uncertainty. The research questions had not directly focused on the effects of funding cuts and managerialism, yet three years' later, their effects were continuing to impinge on youth workers' professional identities and everyday practices.

The 'thick' descriptions of the research methodology in chapter 4 provide details of the audit trail that generated the data and thus supports claims for the reliability of the research processes. The coding of the data was a protracted, if ultimately rewarding, process for it identified thematic patterns in the data that addressed research questions on the youth work phenomenon. It was believed that the potential for researcher bias and 'projection' in the coding of data (Boyatzis, 1998) was minimised in this study by constantly checking themes against the raw data, by incorporating the participants' key words into titles of thematic categories and by clarifying and defining distinctive themes (with additional examples, see appendices 12 and 13) that brought consistency in the coding of data extracts.

Several steps were taken to reduce the influence of my insider knowledge on data collection processes. This involved creating some social distance between the researcher and the researched by using well-placed intermediaries to invite participation in the study and by reflecting on research processes as they evolved, as can be seen in two of the fieldwork notes emailed to my supervisor (see pages 36 and 38).

In addition, I sought to maximise the youth workers' input and minimise my own views by allowing sufficient discursive space for the participants to develop their own trains of thought in response to the questions. This is noticeable in the focus group data extracts, where group members speak first rather than the researcher (see, for example, 7.1, 7.4 and 7.5). This approach did lead to some extensive contributions, as was evident in the Thornville focus group discussion of eight minutes in which participants explained to each other some of the nuances of the Outcomes Star measurement tool (YWID5D). Similarly, it was apparent in the interviews with, for example, Nicola's nine minutes discourse of a memorable work experience of dealing with angry young men banned from the youth project (Nicola, 711_0053) as well as when Greg expounded for fifteen minutes on the mismatch between practices of some agencies and youth workers on a particular housing estate (Greg, 711_0026, YWID4C).

During the data collection, I aimed to stay alert to the social interaction, using open-ended questions to draw in quieter group members, taking account of speech patterns and non-verbal communication that often added emphasis to particular points of view and judging the lull in the interaction as a suitable point to move on to the next question. It was an approach

that involved the use of ‘helicopter skills’ (Hawkins and Shohet, 1989, 37) and ‘reflection-in-action’ (Schön, 1987) - both familiar models of practice in the social professions. The practice of ‘helicoptering’ was to do with standing outside the situation to gain an overview of different perspectives and their wider contexts, while the ‘reflecting-in-action’ model involved making sense of the interaction and a conscious re-positioning as needed at the time in order to facilitate the research process and diminish the impact of the researcher on the construction of knowledge. These useful practice traits served to promote a reflexive stance and improve claims for ethical research practice.

An example of such approaches at work was noted earlier in the discussion over the expression ‘using’ young people (see 8.4). It was evident that the interviewee’s remark that appeared to present the acceptability of ‘using’ young people, triggered resistance from me and was over-riding my intention to facilitate the speaker’s free use of the discursive space. I interpreted the expression as ‘objectifying’ young people and questioned it in keeping with my own conception of professional youth work. This caused an immediate jarring effect on the conversational flow, which led me to adjust my stance in subsequent exchanges in order not to inhibit the discussion.

It was evident that being an insider researcher was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it gave me frames of reference to consider in making sense of the corpus of data that I had gathered from the field but, on the other hand, it involved exercising restraint in responding from my own professional value base. Being transparent in research writing about such biographical influences (see 3.7) was one way to address such dilemmas, for, as Silverman (and Johnson, 2014, above) both point out, it is unreasonable to expect researchers to have a “value-free position” (Silverman, 2011, 414).

In addition, presenting findings that show differing points of view can contribute to claims for being even-handed in the marshalling of data. This was seen in one focus group discussion over ‘the battle over funding’ (YWID5B), which some interpreted in terms of “challenge” and others as “opportunity” (711_0021) and led to the former apparently acquiescing with the moratorium on funding and struggling to finance everyday youth work practice, while the latter appeared stimulated towards more radical, ideologically-informed solutions to funding issues. Similarly, some spoke up for monitoring systems (Victoria, T. p.82) and improving the evidence-base of youth work (Andy, T. p.78), although the general tenor of data was towards furnishing many practical examples of problems in imposing such systems.

Added value to the research project came from applying a blend of discourse and narrative analyses to the data. These approaches, involving the careful selection and annotation of suitable data extracts, once again proved time-consuming yet fascinating, for they furnished

details of social interaction and skilful use of language that was positioning speakers, constructing identities and depicting nuances of professional practice. Moreover, these different forms of analysis showed "convergence" (Gee, 2014b, 195) as they were confirming earlier findings from the first tranche of analysis and portraying a consensus of views across the sample that youth work was often misunderstood, lowly-placed in the professional hierarchy, believed to be about education and advocacy - and other roles and practices as discussed earlier in the analysis. In addition, the inclusion of extended sequences of talk (as shown in chapter 7), which displayed the "communicative functions" and "grammatical devices" of interaction, would enable others to consider the interpretation of data and arguably contributes to claims for validity of the findings (ibid, 196).

It is recognised that making claims for validity in qualitative research can be a vexed issue (Hammersley, 1998; Polkinghorne, 2007). This narrative research study fits into the 'reformed social science' genre of human inquiry that has generated "knowledge about neglected, but significant areas, of the human realm" (Polkinghorne, 2007, 472). Some of its knowledge claims fit more easily into the traditional scientific mould as when aspects of these youth workers' narratives are substantiated by external evidence of the deleterious impact of austerity on community services or increasing public recognition of pressures young people face, especially from social media. Nevertheless, this qualitative research inquiry has also generated thematic and discursive knowledge about the meanings these youth workers ascribe to their roles and values in practice – whilst, at the same time, shedding light on the performance of these discursive accounts in the process.

It was noticeable, that there was sufficient consensus amongst participants to enable a thematic analysis of the data though these findings were not subsequently generalised to the youth worker population. This step was not taken because it was recognised that the participants' accounts were influenced by their different biographies, practice contexts and the research process itself. Nevertheless, the thematic findings do show a level of coherence as the workers often alluded to similar experiences, such as, being poorly understood (YWID4A), or demonstrating commitment to the voluntary relationship (YWID2C) and informal education (YWID 3C), as well as invariably appearing resolute in defending their 'professional' status (YWID2F; YWID6B).

These all contribute to a view that these are likely to be typical concerns of youth workers today. Moreover, the presentation and critique of discursive extracts provide some detailed interpretations of data that is available to readers to consider in their turn. Indubitably, the data is socially constructivist in nature and produces subjective knowledge of the youth work point of view. It has been personally meaningful, enabling me to contribute to my professional area

of interest and underlining useful research strategies for the future, such as the value of reading and reflection as the project evolves and maintaining contact with professional networks and interaction with the research community. Overall, it makes a positive contribution to the professional archives by providing a record of empowering youth work practices with young people that are poorly understood in the public domain and by portraying professional identities that are evolving in response to present-day challenges.

Chapter 9 Conclusions & Recommendations

From the outset of this research project, I was an insider, believing in the value of youth work but recognising that it was still not well understood in the public domain. This research study therefore afforded the opportunity to look more closely into what was happening in youth work today and to hear from youth workers themselves about what youth work meant to them. At an early stage, the professional-managerial tensions emerged as a key issue. I noted the differing conceptions of professionalism appearing in the data, with some workers caught into proving their professionalism by conforming to formal organisational measures of service value while for many others, being professional was overwhelmingly rooted in practising in accordance with their formative professional values and principles. Young people and their need for informal support networks had not changed, but the wider context had, particularly with the massive loss of youth projects and staff at this time that made the position of these youth workers in 2013 increasingly vulnerable.

This study acts to give a voice to some of those grass roots workers and to a profession that is in danger of being over-looked, yet which has a rich array of helpful practices at its disposal to support young people and groups in the community. The research has produced new data on professional youth work identities and practices. Moreover, it has provided youth workers with a discursive space that they seldom occupy in the public consciousness and which they have used to construct an alternative discourse of an educational and supportive service that seeks to be open to all young people and to which others, who share similar values and principles, can relate.

9.1 Sub-identities contributing to the professional identity of youth workers

The research findings show personal, professional and political dimensions to the construction of youth workers' professional identities. Formative biographical experiences often shaped their route into youth work and this was consolidated by induction into youth work practices, by continuing professional development and by commitment to 'being professional' and having 'passion' for youth work. The values and principles of youth work - encompassing beliefs in participation, empowerment, holistic education and voluntary relationships with young people – appeared to infuse youth workers' thinking and practice in which listening to young people, advocating on their behalf and facilitating learning often prevailed. These values and beliefs were the building blocks to youth workers' professional identities and practices. They provided a firm foundation on which youth work roles could evolve and be shaped by different life experiences, personality traits, skill-sets and working contexts that prevailed amongst the workforce. The data produced many depictions of this versatile cadre of professionals, who

were able to act pragmatically in response to young people's needs and draw on their youth work values in their dealings with other agencies.

The youth workers' fundamental concern for young people's well-being was well-evidenced in their lucid accounts of practice, as was shown, for example, in the 'Saving lives' story (YWID3F), and which made clear how their interventions were of significant value to young people in distress. Noticeably, this incident highlighted the unpredictability of everyday youth work practice and the necessity for youth workers to be able to improvise and think-in-action to adapt to changing circumstances. Undoubtedly, this improvisational capacity was a marked asset and integral to effective practice, for it enabled them to deal with unexpected funding shortfalls, handle complex needs or manage professional-managerial tensions that threatened to derail their well-established conception of youth work.

Moreover, these accounts of practice were not artificial, cardboard cut-outs of youth work today but stories that showed existing youth work realities and the enactment of roles in the professional discourse. It positioned youth workers in the midst of their successes and difficulties, caught glimpses of their sense of fun in working with young people and felt some of their frustration over being misunderstood and lowly-prized in the professional hierarchy. Inevitably, these youth workers were advocating on behalf of their profession and resisting attempts to de-professionalise their service. This research study makes clear that youth workers were fully aware of the complexities of their present situation but nevertheless, remained passionate about youth work and committed to their professional community of practice.

9.2 Professional knowledge used by youth workers

The youth work approach was underpinned by the ability to put academic theory into practice. Skills were rooted in theoretical knowledge and practical understanding of adolescence; experiential learning; interpersonal communication; youth work principles, values and practices with individuals and groups; organisational and political systems; project management and staff supervision (see also 8.2). Moreover, this was not a fixed state of knowledge as youth workers showed commitment to reflective practice and continuing professional development. Their ability to improvise and adapt their approach to create meaningful youth work in changing practice contexts was not only a survival tactic in inclement times but also implied they were enacting an attuned responsive service that addressed needs and provided opportunities for young people to flourish and "fulfil their potential as individuals and within the community" (ONS, 2010, SOC 2449).

9.3 Evidence of the value of youth work

The findings portray youth workers caught between 'occupational professionalism' and 'organisational professionalism' (Evetts, 2009) whereby, in the former, they give precedence to ethical youth work practice tailored to young people's needs and, in the latter, they become entangled in bureaucratic accounting systems to justify their work. Occupational professionalism was leading youth workers to invest time into building relationships, understanding local needs and facilitating learning as well as supporting young people in distress, all of which did not easily fit into standardised organisational measures of service value. This tension between professional ways of working and organisational requirements was contributing to professional dilemmas as workers endeavoured to satisfy differing expectations of youth work roles (see YWID5E).

The youth workers were well aware that the 'value' of their youth work might only become discernible at a later date and was dependent on when young people volunteered further reflections on their learning experiences with youth workers. This became clear when youth workers referred to some of the feedback they had received, as when one young man said, "that residential changed my life" (711_0043), and when a young woman introduced the youth worker to her mother at the School Leavers' Assembly, saying, "this is Jessica, who's taught us all about how to be a good friend" (711_0048). These youth work activities that held special meaning for those young people require a suitable system of reporting in order to do justice to such experiences. This study shows that qualitative rather than quantitative accounts can bring the reader closer to understanding the intricacies of professional practice and help to establish the plausibility of claims for both the value of youth work and youth work of value. Consequently, on the basis of these research findings, it is believed that priority should be given to qualitative forms of evidence that explain helpful youth work experiences for young people and, which, moreover, may have the added benefit of contributing to the case for re-funding professional youth work practice.

9.4 Discursive construction of youth work accounts of practice

Discursive and narrative forms of analysis brought to light the constructive nature of the social interaction between youth workers. Conventional speech patterns proliferated within the data and to this was added professional terminology such as 'voluntary relationship' or 'informal education' that clearly resonated within this community of practice. Moreover, the inclusion of annotated data transcripts in the thesis increases the visibility of this interpretation of the data.

Ventriloquation was a noticeable discursive activity that introduced different perspectives into accounts of youth work practice. The ensuing dialogical interaction involved positioning speakers, constructing identities and creating social distance between one group and another.

In fact, as youth workers resisted some stereotypes imposed on them, they were sometimes disparaging of other professionals in order to emphasise positive traits and behaviours in their own professional identities. Overall, the discursive analysis had illuminated thematic patterns and dialogues in youth work practice, as well as bringing the researcher's own role into view.

9.5 Relevance of the research findings

This study has taken soundings of professional youth work at a critical juncture. It affords a snapshot of the youth work scene in 2013, portraying the fluid nature of youth work professional identities that are constantly being reconstructed to deal with the challenges of everyday practice. These identities are shaped by a strong ethical framework of humanistic values and reliant on the quality of youth workers' relationships with young people and others in the community. Being mindful of young people's needs appears to pervade all that these youth workers do and leads them into being educators and advocates, taking up improvisational and supportive roles, acting as agents of change with the capacity to respond in an emergency.

The research has furthermore brought to light the strong youth work professional ethos, which is grounded in their core principles and values that are being maintained in the face of changing accounting systems and organisational practices. In fact, youth workers are clearly grappling with difficulties on several fronts - from the realities of young people's needs to diminishing funding of service provision; from seeking to mitigate the limited public and inter-agency understanding of youth work to dealing with managerialism in the workplace. These competing issues were contributing to acts of 'principled infidelity' as workers manoeuvred between various responsibilities and claims on their time.

Consequently, this study has relevance for the youth work community of practice and members of other professions interested in work with young people. Moreover, it has enabled vibrant youth work voices to be heard and provided evidence of effective youth work practice relevant to wider discourses on services for young people and to those responsible for formulating youth policy and funding of youth provision.

Primarily, the findings are of interest to youth work academics and associate members of the Training Agencies Group for youth and community work lecturers. The study provides examples of practice relevant to youth workers in training (and also others less familiar with the profession) who will find the descriptions of youth work helpful in introducing them to the 'art and science' of youth work. The range of data affords glimpses of the appeal of working with young people as well as offering vignettes of practice with youth workers in listening, supporting and advocacy roles; working with groups, facilitating learning for young people or dealing with present-day challenges.

Secondly, the data provides models of practice for experienced youth workers to consider for it "invites practitioners to juxtapose and weigh their own practices with those reported by the researcher" (Bloor, 1997, 223). These include detailed accounts of professional expertise in action – see stories of 'going out on a limb', 'changing lives' and 'where is the learning' (YWID4E; 8.3). Their portrayal of the interweaving of principles and values within the realities of practice may offer "a new perspective to practitioners" (Silverman, 2011, 434). Moreover, this data portraying youth workers' ability to improvise in difficult times may stimulate the resolve of others to stand firm on their principles, perhaps in acts of 'principled infidelity' (Hoyle and Wallace, 2009), as they too deal with unprecedented challenges to their professional roles.

Thirdly, the findings have relevance for 'other' professionals - including teachers, social workers and health workers – for they challenge stereotypical ideas of youth work and promote partnership work, which may at times appear problematic, yet nevertheless, is stimulating new work practices. Further research into discursive practices amongst professionals could provide more insight into communication strategies to enhance these inter-agency relationships. Moreover, given present concerns over young people's mental health and well-being, the data portrays some of the benefits of involving youth workers in listening and supporting young people as part of generic service provision.

Finally to those involved in wider discourses on youth, the study provides first-hand evidence of beneficial youth work ways of working with young people which need to be heard in arenas where policy and funding decisions are being made. Indeed, the Coalition government's executive summary for 'Positive for Youth' did include youth workers amongst those with a role to play, but they only appeared half-way down the list, being preceded by parents, other adults, the media, teachers and businesses (HM Government, 2011, 3). This study arguably contributes to the case for adjusting this lowly positioning and allowing the contribution of professional youth work practice to be heard.

9.6 Strengths and limitations of the research

The research findings contribute new knowledge of professional youth work identities and practices. This is achieved by thematic and discourse analyses of first-hand accounts of grass-roots youth work that portray sub-identities such as being educators and advocates and reveal the careful fostering of professional values into practice situations. The innovative use of a discursive-narrative analysis to study youth work identities elicited examples of dialogical interaction through which identities were being forged, as others might see from the data transcripts.

Similarly, data triangulation supports claims for reliability of the findings. Most noticeably, the deleterious effects of managerial constraints and diminishing funding on professional practice were corroborated in contemporary accounts as well as in additional steps taken by this researcher to check the validity of interim findings in 2016 (see 8.6). It was clear that a qualitative research approach afforded the best means to make sense of present day youth work. It produced descriptions and explanations of professional roles and practices that might be obscured by over-reliance on positivist quantitative measures to determine the needs of young people and what constituted 'youth work of value'.

The positive remarks by participants about the research process imply it was a beneficial experience, facilitating reflection-on-practice and interaction with "like-minded people" as well as stimulating thinking on their present position in the profession. They valued the "luxury" of telling their story, finding it a "very good opportunity to network and share experiences" within their professional community of practice. In addition, by volunteering examples of their own research intentions, it appeared that this project was contributing to a research culture that could encourage further investigation into youth work practice. Given the positive response of youth workers to this research project, it suggests that they remain an untapped resource for research into professional practice.

Nevertheless, this research study has a limited range for it is only a small-scale inquiry, based in one UK region in 2013. This could be addressed by securing funding for further research into youth work roles and practices in different regions, identifying local challenges that stymie good practice and producing recommendations for action by those managing resources and practices. Another approach could be to study models of youth work practice in different work settings, such as schools and further education colleges, street-based youth work or multi-agency practice settings.

At present, fieldwork reports on practice, even if supported by 'Outcome Star' or other 'Well-being' measures, tend to have a limited impact, coming only to the attention of local funders and service managers rather than being taken up at macro levels to re-shape policy. Furthermore, as this study showed, examples of good youth work practice with individuals, as in the 'saving lives' story, do raise questions as to whether such accounts have to be sensationalised in order to capture public attention and secure political support. Generating more evidence of youth work may be one answer and swell the archives of professional practice. However, producing this evidence may increase the administrative burden and further disrupt the workers' time with young people (as reported in this study), and moreover, may not soften youth policy nor attract re-investment in the sector at the present time.

9.7 Concluding remarks and recommendations

This qualitative research study has added data on the youth work phenomenon, an under-researched area of professional practice. It has given a platform to professional youth workers whose voices are often marginalised in wider discourses on services for young people. As the youth workers shared some of their memorable experiences of practice, they were not only advocating on behalf of young people and their profession but also affording an insider view of some of the challenges and rewards of their professional roles and practices. These detailed descriptions and explanations of youth work have relevance for the professional community of practice and also other agencies interested in developing innovative partnership work around young people. Moreover, the research timing has afforded glimpses of contemporary issues, namely some of the tensions arising from the imposition of managerial practices on established professional ways of working as well as revealing the debilitating effect of austerity measures on the youth sector at this time.

It is believed that dissemination of the research findings to interested parties will contribute to present discourses on the place of professional youth work in services for young people. This contribution derives from this first-hand evidence of the realities of practice that portray not only some skilful youth work responses to young people in need but also depictions of ethical practice in some complex inter-agency practice settings.

Recommendations

To build on this research study, it is recommended that there is

- Qualitative research into innovative youth work practices in partnership with other agencies to draw out examples of good practice for wider dissemination.
- Investment in professional development and practitioner-research to strengthen the evidence base for the sector.
- Further research using discourse analysis to look into the social interaction between youth workers and young people in practice settings.

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Encyclopaedia for Informal Education www.infed.org

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Institute for Youth Work	www.iyw.org.uk
Msunderstood	www.msunderstood.org.uk
National Citizen Service	www.ncsyes.co.uk
National Youth Agency	www.nya.org.uk
Policing Dialogues	http://section8.ie/wordpress/
Training Agencies Group	www.tagpalycw.org
Young Foundation	www.youngfoundation.org
Youth Star	www.outcomesstar.org.uk/youth-star/

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Conference Abstract: 'Analysing Practitioners' stories – analysis of two pilot studies into the value of youth work', (Pope, 2012)

Abstract of presentation by Paula Pope to Training Agencies Group Annual Conference for The Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work held at Brathay Hall, Cumbria 9-11 July 2012. *The online abstract appears in the TAG Booklet 2012, pages 11-12.*

Analysing Practitioners' Stories – Analysis of two pilot studies into the value of youth work

Paula Pope, Glyndwr University

p.pope@glyndwr.ac.uk

In recent times, many in the youth and community sector have been preoccupied in finding ways to demonstrate the value of their professional practice in order to influence those who are making decisions on youth policy and allocating resources across the sector. One source of evidence of its value can be qualitative research studies that use interviews and focus groups to generate data about the everyday realities and nuances of youth and community work. This paper reflects on learning from two small pilot studies, 'Discourses from youth work practice- the youth worker's story' (2010) with ten participants and 'The insider view – how youth workers construct accounts of their professional practice' (2012) with five participants. Both studies involved recording youth workers' conversations about their practice and transcribing the data for later analysis.

Qualitative research methods tend to be productive and create a body of empirical data that can illuminate practice. Such 'insider' research may provide a platform from which to explain youth work principles, roles and practices to others. However, given its qualitative nature, some of those positioned elsewhere may require more evidence of its reliability. It also has to be considered whether these forms of evidence provide sufficiently meaningful responses to those wanting us to "make a better fist of explaining what a difference you make".

Determining which form of analysis to perform on the data is also significant. This paper considers insights gained from firstly a critique of the data that draws on the politically informed work of Michel Foucault and his concept of power-knowledge that creates differing subject positions. A second analysis uses conversation analysis that was developed by Harvey Sacks, to explore sequences of talk about work that contributes to the formation of professional identities.

The paper concludes by discussing learning acquired so far and its implications for the next stage of research activity. It opens up the debate on the differing arguments to consider in creating meaningful research that informs practice and which also may contribute evidence on the value of the professional domain to other interested parties.

[Web Reference: https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A3=ind1206&L=TAGMEMBERS&E=base64&P=133571&B=------_%3D_NextPart_001_01CD4A29.66ACF95A&T=application%2Fvnd.openxmlformats-officedocument.wordprocessingml.document;%20name=%22TAG%20Conference%20booklet%20%28June%29.docx%22&N=TAG%20Conference%20booklet%20%28June%29.docx&attachment=q&XSS=3]

Appendix 2: University Research Ethical Review Panel letter of approval for research study

Keele University

RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE SERVICES

3rd January 2013

Ms Paula Pope

Dear Ms Pope

Re: 'A qualitative study into youth workers' discourses of professional practice'

Thank you for submitting your revised project for review.

The ERP now understand that you do not as yet have permission to approach the potential participants but have identified mechanism for this. Please ensure that you keep these permissions in case Nicola Leighton receives any queries in the future related to this project.

I am pleased to inform you that your project has been approved by the Ethics Review Panel.

The following documents have been reviewed and approved by the panel as follows:

Document(s)	Version Number	Date
Summary Proposal	P.Pope/Project Summary/ Version 27 Nov 2012	20th December 2012
Letter of Invitation(s)	P.Pope/ Research Invitation/ Version 18 Dec 2012	20th December 2012
Information Sheet(s)	P.Pope/ Research Info Sheet/ Version 18 Dec 2012	20th December 2012
Consent Form(s)	P.Pope/ Consent Form A/ Version 26 Nov 2012	20th December 2012
Consent Form(s) for use of quotes	P.Pope/ Consent Form B Quotes/ Version 26 Nov 2012	20th December 2012
Interview Topic Guide(s)	P.Pope/ Interview Topics/ Version 26 Nov 2012	20th December 2012

If the fieldwork goes beyond the date stated in your application (September 2013), you must notify the Ethical Review Panel via Elizabeth Cameron

If there are any other amendments to your study you must submit an 'application to amend study' form to Elizabeth Cameron. This form is available through the following link, http://www.keele.ac.uk/researchsupport/researchethics/

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Elizabeth Cameron in writing to uso.erps@uso.keele.ac.uk

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Cameron
ERP1 Administrator

Dr Jackie Waterfield
Chair – Ethical Review Panel
CC Supervisor: Dr John Howlett

Appendix 3: Agency invitation letter for involvement in youth work research and permission slip

Keele University

Youth Agency Manager

18 December 2012

Dear

Invitation for agency involvement in youth work research: 'A qualitative study into youth workers' discourses of professional practice'

I am writing to introduce myself as a doctorate student carrying out research into youth work practice as part of my studies at Keele University. I am writing to you for an appointment to discuss this research project further.

I would like your permission to approach one or two of your qualified youth work staff to see if they may be interested in taking part in a qualitative research study into youth workers' stories of practice. The research would take place in spring 2013 and generate data for completion of my education doctorate. Overall, about ten professionally qualified youth workers would be involved in the study.

An information sheet explaining the research process is attached for your attention. The staff commitment would be to a one-off hour long focus group discussion with about four other youth workers at a local venue with the option of a follow up in-depth interview for some of them at a later date. Potential research participants need to be professionally qualified JNC youth workers who work some of the time at the grass roots level with young people. Staff members are under no obligation to take part for participation is voluntary and data treated confidentially.

The research intention is to make a positive contribution to the ongoing debates on services for young people. Research participants will also be encouraged to share their own good practice more widely outside the research setting.

This research study is supervised by Dr John Howlett at Keele University, who may be contacted at j.howlett@keele.ac.uk or telephone 01782 734151. It has been approved through the Ethical Review Panel of Keele University, with Nicola Leighton, Research Governance Officer as the point of contact at n.leighton@uso.keele.ac.uk or telephone 01782 733306.

I hope to speak to you soon and thank you for the consideration you are able to give to my request.

With good wishes
Sincerely Paula Pope

Email: p.m.pope@keele.ac.uk
Research Mobile Tel: xxxx
By email, response slip to acknowledge granting of permission

Invitation for agency involvement in youth work research: 'A qualitative study into youth workers' discourses of professional practice'

Permission Note Date

Thank you for giving me permission to approach qualified youth work staff in your agency to invite one or two of them to take part in this study.

In the event of any follow up inquiry about this research, please contact me at the email address below. Sincerely Paula Pope

Email: p.m.pope@keele.ac.uk
Research Mobile Tel: xxxx

[Reference: P.Pope/ Research Invitation /Version 18Dec 2012
1 for participant]

Appendix 4: Youth worker invitation letter for involvement in youth work research

April 2013

Dear colleague

Invitation to take part in a research study into youth work practice:

I am writing to introduce myself as a doctoral student carrying out research into youth work practice as part of my studies at Keele University. You are cordially invited to take part in this small research study into youth workers' stories of practice that will take place in spring 2013 and generate data for completion of my education doctorate.

I have discussed this research with your agency manager who is agreeable to follow up contact with project staff to check for expressions of interest and availability to be involved in this activity. However you are under no obligation to take part for participation is voluntary. You have been identified as a potential research participant because you fit the research criteria of a professionally qualified JNC youth worker working at the grass roots level with young people.

The commitment is likely to involve an hour or so of your time for the focus group discussion with about four other youth workers at a local venue with the option of taking part in a follow up interview at a later date. Overall about ten professionally qualified youth workers will be involved in the study.

The attached information sheet sets out further details about the research project. I hope you can give me some initial indication whether you would be interested in taking part in this activity and I can then follow up with further information in due course.

With good wishes

Sincerely Paula Pope

Email: p.m.pope@keele.ac.uk
Research Mobile Tel: xxxx

Keele University

Information Sheet

Study Title: 'A qualitative study into youth workers' discourses of professional practice'.

Aims of the Research: The purpose of the research is to gather first-hand accounts of everyday youth work practice with young people. This will involve professional conversations with youth workers to shed light on some of the taken-for-granted activities that can make a difference to young people's lives. The long-term aim is to enable the voices of practice to come to the forefront and contribute to the national debate on the nature and value of youth work.

Invitation: You are being invited to consider taking part in the research study 'A qualitative study into youth workers' discourses of professional practice'. This project is being carried out by Paula Pope as part of an education doctorate at Keele University.

Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with colleagues and young people you work with if you wish. Please ask me if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.

Why have I been chosen? You have been chosen because you are a professionally qualified youth worker who is working with young people at the grass roots level. Your employing agency has agreed to me approaching you to ask if you would be interested and able to take part. You will be one of about ten youth workers taking part altogether in the study.

Do I have to take part? You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign two consent forms, one is for you to keep and the other is for my records. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without giving reasons.

What will happen if I take part? You will be invited to attend one focus group discussion with about four other people and the meeting is expected to last between 60-80 minutes, at a local venue in Spring 2013. You may be asked if you would be interested in contributing later on by taking part in an hour long semi-structured interview at a mutually agreeable place and time.

If I take part, what do I have to do? Participants join in a focus group discussion that explores what led you into youth work; descriptions of everyday practice – its challenges and rewards; the impact of youth policy on practice and sharing examples of youth work of value. At the close of the focus group, there is a brief discussion to identify three group volunteers, who come from diverse practice settings and are interested in elaborating further through an in-depth interview.

What are the benefits (if any) of taking part? Taking part in such studies can be beneficial for it can enable you to tell your stories of practice and affirm your own work and that of others. The story telling process is also an opportunity to advocate on behalf of young people and the youth work profession.

What are the risks (if any) of taking part? There are no perceived risks in taking part in this study.

How will information about me be used? The focus groups and interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. The transcripts will be analysed using thematic framework and discourse analysis to shed light on everyday youth work practice. Individual contributions will be made anonymous and may be quoted to illustrate particular points within the thesis and also in a subsequent journal article that will be produced to disseminate research findings. Please note, no entire verbatim scripts will be published. The collected data will not be retained for use in future research studies.

Who will have access to information about me? Research data will be stored on a password protected computer. Each contribution will be codified and made anonymous so that individuals can not be identified. Those taking part in the study will be asked not to disclose any confidential information about themselves nor individual service users with whom they are working. The data will not be made available to any third party without the consent of the research participant. On completion of the study, any potentially identifiable data will be destroyed after six months and other data held for up to three years to enable dissemination of research findings.

I do however have to work within the confines of current legislation over such matters as privacy and confidentiality, data protection and human rights and so offers of confidentiality may sometimes be overridden by law. For example in circumstances whereby I am made aware of future criminal activity, abuse either to yourself or another (i.e. child or sexual abuse) or suicidal tendencies I must pass this information to the relevant authorities.

Who is funding and organising the research? There is no external funding for this research. The study is being undertaken as part of a doctorate at Keele University.

What if there is a problem? If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher who will do her best to answer your questions. You should contact Paula Pope at p.m.pope@keele.ac.uk or on *****, which is a dedicated mobile number for this research study. Alternatively, if you do not wish to contact the researcher, you may contact Dr John Howlett, thesis supervisor at Keele University, j.howlett@keele.ac.uk or on 01782 734151.

If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please write to Nicola Leighton who is the University's contact for complaints regarding research at the following address: - Nicola Leighton, Research Governance Officer, Research & Enterprise Services, Dorothy Hodgkin Building, Keele University, ST5 5BG

E-mail: n.leighton@uso.keele.ac.uk Tel: 01782 733306
Contact for further information: Paula Pope p.m.pope@keele.ac.uk

[Reference: P.Pope/ Research Info Sheet/Version 18 Dec 2012
1 for participant, 1 for researcher]

Appendix 6: Focus Group Topics

Research Title: 'A qualitative study into youth workers' discourses of professional practice' **Researcher:** Paula Pope p.m.pope@keele.ac.uk

Focus group topics

1. Becoming a youth worker.
   What led you into youth work? How have your ideas and practice of youth work developed since you started?

2. Youth workers have many professional roles, relationships and activities.
   What are some of the things you do as part of your youth work role?

3. *What are some of the challenges and rewards of your everyday practice?*

4. Over the last decade, the British government has continually reshaped policies that affect young people. Most recently in 2011, the Coalition Government education committee inquired into 'Services for Young People' before issuing its own 'Positive for Youth' policy.
   From your experience, can you see any ways in which government and youth policy is influencing your everyday youth work practice today?

5. There is much debate over what sorts of work with young people is of value and how you might measure it.
   What do you think helps to create youth work of value?

[Reference: P.Pope/ Focus group topics/Version April 2013
1 for participant, 1 for researcher]

Appendix 7: Guide to Interview Questions

1.	Introductory question: What's it like to be a youth worker?
2.	Impact of region and community on practice: Can you give any examples of how this geographical region and/ or local community has influenced you and shaped your everyday practice?
3.	'Here and now' realities for young people and youth workers: (a) What are some of the 'here and now' realities that young people are experiencing in your patch? (b) What are some of the 'here and now' realities for you and youth work colleagues in your agency or network?
4.	Memorable experiences: (a) What are some of the most memorable experiences you have had as a youth worker? (b) How have they contributed to you becoming the youth worker you are today? (c) What was some of the significance of this practice and its wider positive effects?
5.	Third space identities: (a) Can you give any examples of tensions between meeting agency and policy targets and your beliefs and values about ways of working with young people? (b) What are some of the strategies you use in those situations? (c) Did it involve taking a risk? What sort of risk?
6.	Youth work source materials: (a) Please tell me about three written source materials that influence your everyday youth work practice. (b) How are they meaningful for you? (c) Can you give me an example of how you use them in your practice?
7.	The language of youth work: (a) Do you think youth work has a common language? Can you give me some examples? (b) Are there any challenges for you in trying to maintain these particular characteristics, ideas, beliefs or values in your practice today?
8.	Youth work conversations (a) How might you like to change the conversation about what is happening in youth work today? (b) Can you think of any metaphors or images that help to describe your youth work practice?
9.	Anything else: (a) Is there anything else you would like to say about your youth work practice that we haven't touched on today? (b) Do you like being a youth worker? (c) What are some of the things you find enjoyable in your job that you would like to share with others? (d) What does being a professional mean to you?
10.	Interview and research feedback: (a) How was the interview process for you? (b) What has been the effect of doing our interview in this setting? (c) What do you think might be useful for the youth work sector from this research? (d) What might help you to develop your own youth work research and writing activities?

Appendix 8: Guide to transcription symbols and glossary of discursive and narrative terms

Guide to transcription symbols

The transcription symbols applied to discourse analysis in this study are adapted from T.A. van Dijk (1997, 313-4) and P. ten Have (2007, 215-6). Note, other punctuation marks in the transcript are used only for grammatical purposes and reflect the speaker's rhythm of speech and narrative style, as heard on the audio-recording.

Symbol	**Purpose**
… three dots	Shows where data was omitted in this transcript.
- hyphen	Indicates where the previous word is cut short.
underlining	Demonstrates where speakers place emphasis in their accounts.
CAPITAL LETTERS	Indicates louder speech compared to other talk in this sequence.
= equals sign	Represents the 'latched' response, where there is immediate continuity between different speakers.
[ ] speech in brackets	Indicates over-lapping speech, the left bracket shows where the overlap starts and the right bracket where it ends.
(.) dot in brackets	Denotes a brief pause in talk.
(.5) dot with number in brackets	Represents the length of the pause in tenths of seconds (here 0.5 means half a second).
Chuckles, taps	Indicates audible sounds heard on the audio recording.
(( )) double brackets	Denotes transcriber's comments in the brackets.

Glossary of discursive and narrative terms

Text	**Explanation**
Adjacency pair	A two part sequence of talk with the first part of the exchange, such as a question, closely followed by the second part, the answer (Have, 2007).
Conversation analysis (CA)	A form of discourse analysis to study 'naturally occurring talk' or 'talk in interaction' in social situations (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2008).
Discourse	A collection of spoken or written statements that represent the current meanings that are held on a topic (Hall, 1997).
Discourse markers	The use of adverbs ('now', 'then'), interjections ('oh', 'ah'), conjunctions ('and', 'but') or "lexicalised phrases" ('you know', I mean') (Schriffin, 2001) to link different parts of a speech.
Footing	A person's alignment in a social situation that adjusts to the participant's status and the production format of the interaction (Goffman, 1981).
Genderlect	The theory that men and women communicate differently (Tannen, 1990).
Hedging	A qualification and toning down of utterances (Wales, 2011).
Membership category	A person's use of speech and behaviours, to identify with and display membership and distinctive practices (known as category-bound activities) associated with a particular social group (van Dijk, 1997).
Metaphor	A figure of speech with rhetorical impact that maps a commonality across two different conceptual domains (Lakoff, 1992).
Preference & sequence organisation	In CA, a 'preferred' or 'dis-preferred' conversational 'turn' at speaking, whereby speakers accept or decline a particular form of words. The speakers' preference for speaking in one way rather than another is seen in the organisation of their talk (Pomerantz, 1984).
Repair	A speaker's correction to a speech error that might be misunderstood. It may be signalled by phrases such as, 'I mean' (Have, 2007).
Response token	A listener's response to acknowledge the previous speaker's utterance e.g. 'mm' (Gardner, 2001).

Stake inoculation	The use of phrases such as 'I don't know' to 'inoculate' against the effect of being seen to have a vested interest in the topic (Potter, 1997).
Subject position	A person's orientation to a meaningful discursive position in a story-line. Speaking from that 'subject position' (Davies and Harré, 1990) gives the speaker 'a footing' in the interaction and position in the discourse.
Talk-in-interaction	A CA term to describe turn-taking, repair, preference and sequence organisation in the ordering of speech (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2008).
Three-part list	A recognised feature of everyday talk in which speakers connect three elements for oratorical effect e.g. 'this, that and the other' (Jefferson,1991)
Turn-taking	A descriptive term to explain how speakers take turns in the conversation and choose to design their 'turn' in particular ways (Sacks et al., 1974).

Glossary References (*also see full citation in list of thesis references*)

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Appendix 9: Examples to illustrate 'open coding of data'

Sample of data extracts to portray open coding of four responses to questions on, firstly, 'becoming a youth worker' and secondly, 'the youth worker's roles'

Data Extract (1) (Becoming a YW)	**Open codes**
I was a druggy drop out er and I did the, and I had a drug support worker that got me onto the Princes Trust course when I was twenty two, and when I did the Princes Trust course, that is when I said this, this is what I want to do, I want to work with young people, like obviously a lot of people on the course were kind of like a similar ilk to myself and you know from really difficult backgrounds, tough upbringings, but when you see what happens on twelve week development project with young people it is amazing and that is why I said, I actually said I wanted to be a social worker and my team leader said to me don't be a social worker, you will end up banging your head against the wall, fighting bureaucracy, he said go and do youth work, so that is what I did, I went back to college for a year and then three years at Uni, so technically drugs did bring me into youth work.	Drugs background Influence of significant adult Experience of Princes Trust 'This is what I want to do'- focus on work with young people (YP) Aware of other young adults' experience 'really difficult backgrounds, tough upbringings' Positive effect of fixed term youth development programme Influence of second significant adult Negative perception of social work Return to education University course
Andy, 711_0019, 00.40-01.30	Links to major themes 1, 3, 4

Data Extract (2) (Becoming a YW)	**Open codes**
I got into youth work because I had a really positive experience of my children's clubs and youth clubs at the church that I went to when I was younger, erm so I started volunteering well from the time I was like twelve thirteen and as I grew a bit older the age group I worked with went up a bit, so as part of that I went over to Ireland to do some erm young people's holiday erm week things and it was only meant to be for like eleven and twelve year olds but it was on a really run down rough estate erm in [place], so you ended up having like eight year olds up to twenty odd year olds turning up for this youth club, for this youth week and you couldn't turn them away because they were just so desperate to have somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to and seeing what the difference just one week of us being there made, it said I have got to do this for a job, erm and that's how I got into it so I then went on to find the university course I wanted to do er and I found the job in [place]	Own positive experience of children's and young people's groups Volunteering Experience of working with young people Difficult places YP live Young people's needs 'desperate to have someone to talk to' (3 part list) The difference that youth work makes (NB very short intervention) 'I have got to do this for a job' University course
Philip, 711_0019, 11.05-11.59	Links to major themes 1, 3

Data Extract (3) (YW roles)	**Open codes**
There's, there's real damage being done there because young people are, you know they pretend that they don't hear it sometimes when	Understanding young people YP's bravado

teachers say, 'you know, you're not achieving and you're not going necessarily anywhere', so yea, they're not, like they're saying they're not achieving and stuff and they, they take it on and some of them will believe I'm destined, at sixteen, they'll believe I'm destined to go on to the dole, I'm destined to just live off government benefits for the rest of my life; when I need some more I'll have another kid, and like they'll, they'll believe they're destined for that and like a key role for the youth worker is to try and argue against that because it's been pounded into them all day at school and like if you take that to extremes you could be like well I'm destined to deal drugs or I'm destined to rob banks or whatever you, whatever it is and they, they take that in, they very much take that in and will focus on that and it's a huge weight, a huge thing to try and flip that round and the more youth work is getting cut, the more the big job is for those that are left, erm especially within, within the er council places as well.	Impact of negative messages especially from school (Negative effect of significant adult) Impact on young people Rhetoric of 'destined' (6 times here) YW role to be supportive, to 'try' to counter negativity YP experience Rhetorical emphasis of 'pounded' Emphasises heavy impact on YP of negative feedback Challenge for YW to turn it round Impact of youth work cuts
Ed, 711_0014, 21.00 -21.15	Links to major themes 3, 4, 5

Data Extract (4) (YW roles)	**Open codes**
Yeah, when the council (youth workers) have to justify running, they have to run a certain number of accreditations which means they have to cut their time of informal education, to do enough accreditations to satisfy their bosses so they carry on their funding, otherwise the youth club would shut, so I think the youth workers are being really creative with that and you know are doing the accreditations so that, so their centre stays open, I completely understand, I would do the same. I, I do, I do to a degree have to do the same, erm but again it is squeezing the amount of relational work that can be done erm so you get literally the number of youth workers being cut and then you also cut the amount of time that they can spend doing relational work, erm and if, but it is the only way that they can run; it is the only way they can carry on doing it, and then you get the other side and you were saying about people being forced into this model of 'you won't, you know, you're never going to get a job', expectation is incredibly low, when the expectations are unattainably high and they're leaving the feeling of disappointment and not living up to what my teachers want me to do or my parents want me to do, that can be just as gutting for them as an individual, and it's, it's trying, yea, force them into a model.	'Yeah' -agrees with above viewpoint Have to justify the service Use of accreditation to justify service Negative impact as time lost for usual informal education youth work Funding imperative Agrees with this stance, describes it as 'creative' (cf compliance/ subversive) Accreditations (3); relational work (2) Rhetoric 'squeezing' Loss of time to do relationship work with YP –core activity Youth workers being cut Agrees with workers being pragmatic so can continue to have youth work Links back to previous speaker and echoes his words Paradox low/ high expectations Negative messages to young people Evocative rhetoric 'gutting' Reiterates 'yea' as at start. Force into a model -as a way of treating/ working with YP?
Jason, 711_0014, 21.16-23.25	Links to major themes 3, 4, 5

Appendix 10: Subsections of thematic categories emerging from data analysis

YWID 1 'Becoming a youth worker- background experiences and training'				
1A Shaping and directing a route into youth work	1B Developing understanding of adolescent issues and ways to help	1C The appeal of working with young people	1D Opening doors through education	
YWID 2 'Sharing youth work values and professional ethos'				
2A Abiding by the core values	2B Addressing equal opportunities	2C Voluntary relationship	2D Empowering practice	2E Holistic view of education
2F Professional ethos				
YWID 3 'Leading at the same time as serving - knowledge, skills and roles in practice'				
3A Knowledge of the realities of young lives	3B Building relationships with young people and in the community	3C Being an informal educator	3D Youth work skills in practice	3E Facilitating project and group work processes
3F Listening, advocacy and range of one-to-one work	3G Managing administration	3H The diversity of work roles		
YWID 4 'Moving from practice tensions to practice wisdom'				
4A Misconceptions of youth work practice	4B Uneasy relationships with other agencies	4C Tensions between police and youth work roles	4D School- based youth work: from teething troubles to feeling valued as professional colleagues	4E Practice wisdom – what works in practice
YWID 5 'Changing times – diminishing funding and increasing managerialism'				
5A Cuts to service provision – loss of staff and projects	5B The constant battle over funding	5C The impact of targeting	5D Distance travelled – the focus on outcome measures	5E Professional dilemmas
YWID 6 'Being professional youth workers - where to now?'				
6A Views on professional standing	6B Gatekeeping the field	6C Views on national standing of youth work	6D Professional contribution and legacy	

Appendix 11: Examples of thematic categorisation of data for three participant cases

Participant 'Jade'

Becoming a youth worker	**Sharing youth work values and professional ethos**
"I just went for this job not really knowing what it was about, it's like OK, and then twelve months being a street mate sort of reshaped me outlook on where I was going" (711_0019) (YWID1A)	"I can also empower young people, with giving them a voice whilst doing what my skill is, dancing" (711_0019) (YWID2D)

Leading at the same time as serving	**Moving from practice tensions to practice wisdom**
"Then the other thing for me is to actually sit there and, as you said before, just listen because they are fed up of getting spoken to, they just want somebody to listen to how they're feeling" (711_0020) (YWID3F)	"Young people…need that little bit of encouragement and if they are not getting it from home or friends, family what have you, there is that place to go where we can help...in some sort of educational way, and whether they know they are getting educated or not, we are educating them" (711_0022) (YWID4F)

Changing times	**Being professional youth workers- where to now**
"What's keeping me motivated I should say in me role at the moment, because as you know as all of us being youth workers, it is a bit hard with the redundancies, 'are we getting made redundant? Oh, what's going on now?' But if you have got a good piece of work, you can just battle on through all the dramas and just carry on doing your work" (711_0020) (YWID5A)	"There's lots of youth workers not just within Thornville just going around networking and you can talk to some people sometimes and think, how do you work with young people, if you can't speak to me" (711_0023) (YWID6B)

Participant 'Sophie'

Becoming a youth worker	**Sharing youth work values and professional ethos**
"I find myself now like fighting for young people that were like me when I was younger that are just getting completely ignored, for whatever reason they're not seeing things" (711_0013) (YWID1B)	"A young person disclosed something to me that made social services be phoned… it feels like you are building up this relationship and then you are doing something that you are duty bound to do and you know that you have to do but it's hard" (711_0014) (YWID2F)

Leading at the same time as serving	**Moving from practice tensions to practice wisdom**
"No matter how many deadlines are coming out your ears, you know you still need to spend time with young people but it is more	"I think you have got to build their trust up in the school, I think with all the teachers and

time in the office at the minute, it's just horrific isn't it?" (711_0014) (YWID3G)	that's the hardest bit than the young people to be honest" (711_0014) (YWID4D)

Changing times	**Being professional youth workers- where to now**
"Targets, targets definitely…I think we have to hit so many, we have to meet so many new young people and get so many accreditations and recorded outcomes…it is hard especially when you have got no funding to be able to get any targets of any kind" (711_0015) (YWID5C)	"I've had a lot of people saying to me 'do you get paid for your job' though so, you know, a lot, even young people say 'oh do you get paid for this', so no one is seeing it as any kind of profession anyway" (711_0015) (YWID6A)

Participant 'Peter'

Becoming a youth worker	**Sharing youth work values and professional ethos**
"They wanted someone to listen to them and talk about the issues that they had and not just what one plus one is, it is more sort of like, well this is (sic) the issues that young people face, drugs, sex, rock and roll, that sort of stuff and that is what I really enjoyed learning and …that was how I got involved in youth work" (711_0019) (YWID1B)	"I got really engrossed in the core values of youth work and I really enjoyed that and I really took that on board" (711_0019) (YWID2A)

Leading at the same time as serving	**Moving from practice tensions to practice wisdom**
"If you can work with a young person and build a relationship with them, build a stable relationship, it, it gets to a point where they're able to talk about anything to you if they want" (711_0020) (YWID3B)	"At the end you say 'well, you know what, you have learnt this, this, this and this'. 'Have I?' 'Yea, you didn't think that did you?' So I like, I like that sort of idea of like you get them to learn without having to, without having any money" (711_0021) (YWID4E)

Changing times	**Being professional youth workers- where to now**
"It just seems to be like we're targeting the vulnerable young people more now than we are the ones who are potentially going places" (711_0021) (YWID5C)	"For me it just seems like we are policing now … it's just stemmed down from 'oh how are we going to solve crime issues', rather than 'oh we are going to work with young people who are in most need'" (711_0022) (YWID6C)

Appendix 12: Supplementary descriptive evidence to support thematic analysis in chapter 5 (YWID 1-3)

The major themes are each described briefly below to provide points of reference and to aid consistency in determining the positioning of subsequent similar extracts of data:

Overarching theme YWID 1: 'Becoming a youth worker'

The first category **'Becoming a youth worker c**onsists of four major themes.

Shaping and directing a route into youth work: The route into youth work was sometimes motivated by faith or a wish to bring something back into their community. It was a journey that usually involved formative voluntary (or paid) work experience with young people. As the participants gained experience and came into contact with significant role models, they became aware that youth work was a full time job and had a professional career pathway.

Developing understanding of adolescent issues and ways to help: Some were spurred on to becoming youth workers because of their own troublesome adolescence and wanting to provide the right sort of support for young people. Others found their early fieldwork experiences increased their understanding of adolescent issues and saw how youth work could have positive effects. These insights contributed to their decisions to become youth workers.

The appeal of working with young people: Working with young people was described as fun and a source of motivation. It was challenging and enjoyable due in part to young people's energy and their potential.

Opening doors through education: Previously, some participants had negative experiences of education that left them feeling 'frustrated' and 'desperate' as learning needs were not met. They began to have alternative positive experiences, often through informal education with youth workers that led them to return to education and follow through to university and gain a professional qualification. Some expressed surprise at their own level of academic success. This course had given them a starting point on which to build, had stimulated personal growth and 'amazing' experiences that contributed to feeling passionate about their job.

Overarching theme or category: YWID 1: Becoming a youth worker This category is comprised of four major themes:-			
A Shaping and directing a route into youth work	**B Developing understanding of adolescent issues and ways to help**	**C The appeal of working with young people**	**D Opening doors through education**
Voluntary and paid work experience	Own difficult adolescence	Enjoying the fun and challenges of work with young people	Negative experience of education
Influence of significant adult	Understanding adolescence		Positive experience of education
Realisation youth work was a job	Seeing the difference youth work can make		Entry into higher education
Motivation (e.g. faith; altruism)			Emergence from professional training
			Personal development

Two extracts of data associated with each major theme appear in the table below:

Theme	Example of data	Coded as
Shaping and directing a route into youth work YWID1A	"The worker in charge…I often think of her as my mentor because she was a single parent and she used to run this youth club part-time; she was a teacher in her day job, and I just thought she was amazing" (Katherine 711_0019, 15.27-15.38)	Influence of significant adult
Shaping and directing a route into youth work YWID1A	"(I) met somebody that was currently looking for someone to to do some voluntary work in a youth drop in centre as it was at the time, and I went there to be a volunteer to do their admin support with absolutely no intentions of working with young people, … I remember saying don't let me go on any training courses, I'm just coming to do admin that's all I want to do so started doing that erm got hooked into it a little bit, meeting the kids that were coming into the drop in, erm did a little bit of part-time youth work local training…and then signed myself up for a Substance Misuse degree and after that I did my professional qualification and then, and then here I am" (Jessica, 711_0049, 06.33-07.26)	Voluntary and paid work experience Entry into Higher Education
Developing understanding of adolescent issues and ways to help YWID1B	"I think I got into youth work because I used to access a youth club when I was younger and erm, I think, I was going through a bit of a bad time, I had run away from home and stuff…I find myself now like fighting for young people that were like me when I was younger that are just getting completely ignored" (Sophie, 711_0013, 08.18-08.31; 09.07-09.14)	Own difficult adolescence
Developing understanding of adolescent issues and ways to help YWID1B	"I want to support young people who go through similar, or are in similar places, that is my hope so that is why I think I did the degree in youth work because that's what I want for young people growing up" (Scott, 711_0013, 07.48-08.04)	Own difficult adolescence
The appeal of working with young people YWID1C	"Actually I really love working with younger people because they are just more fun. They have more interesting ideas, they are often slightly harder work, but the potential in them is just so real, and quite often they haven't had time to be stamped down too far by the world that they are just in the rat race, like everybody else" (Carl, 711_0019, 07.17-07.43)	Enjoying the fun and challenges of work with young people
The appeal of working with young people YWID1C	"I think it probably keeps you young I think when you are interacting with young people… you know I don't think it truly is altruistic … there is something you get I think from being around young people, the energy that they've got" (Ben, 711_0041, 00.53-01.08)	Enjoying the fun and challenges of work with young people
Opening doors through education YWID1D	"Basically in high school I was just really disillusioned, I was just crap to be honest with you and what happened was, I just thought education wasn't for me; I just thought I couldn't do that and eventually I finished high school and I went to college straight after that but it was actually working with youth workers that was kind of like, hang on it's	Negative experience of education Positive experience of education

	like education, it's actually school that I didn't like, and I really enjoyed that kind of thing where it was really informal" (Peter, 711_0019, 02.38- 03.15)	
Opening doors through education YWID1D	"It's a lot of reflective practice; you're looking at what you do and how you engage with people and how you do things and that makes you a better person and a better youth worker hopefully, so it's very cathartic I think" (Andy, 711_0019, 02.18-02.31)	Emergence from professional training Personal development

Overarching theme YWID 2: 'Sharing youth work values and professional ethos'

The second category **'Sharing youth work values and professional ethos'** consists of six major themes.

Abiding by the core values: The frequent references to the core professional values suggested they were an integral part of youth workers' professional identity and praxis. Moreover, they could not be taken for granted and needed constant attention by all staff members in order to develop ethical practice.

Addressing equal opportunities: This framework of 'youth work values' involved addressing equal opportunities through challenging oppressive practices and overcoming barriers that limited individual access to opportunities. Workers' own experiences of oppression were influential in developing their commitment to anti-oppressive practice.

Voluntary relationship: The voluntary engagement of young people in the youth work relationship was a fundamental belief that was being increasingly tested when youth workers were working in partnership with other agencies.

Empowering young people: This strongly-held belief involved providing support in ways that suited young people and enabled them to access spaces, resources and information through which they could make informed decisions about their lives.

Holistic view of education: The educational thread permeating workers' accounts was envisioned as a broad concept that was life enhancing. It could be stimulated through youth work practices in social education, informal education and experiential learning as well as through their work in more formal educational settings.

Professional ethos: The discourse was imbued with understanding of professional roles and responsibilities, with a focus and commitment to work with young people.

Overarching theme: YWID 2: Sharing youth work values and professional ethos This category is comprised of six major themes:-			
A Abiding by the core values	**B Addressing equal opportunities**	**C Voluntary relationship**	**D Empowering Practice**
Core values	Influence of own experiences of oppression	Young people choosing to be involved	Starting where the young person is at
Shared value base	Understanding the barriers and promoting inclusion		Young people making informed choices

	Taking individual needs into account		
E Holistic view of education	**F Professional Ethos**		
Person centred education	Focus on work with young people		
Education for life	Commitment to being professional		

Two extracts of data associated with each major theme appear in the table below:

Theme	Example of data	Coded as
Abiding by the core values YWID2A	"I'm not sure that youth work changes that much, because I think youth work is about the attitude you bring to the young people and the young people may be facing different situations but we still need the same attitude of respecting young people, empowering young people, educating young people, voluntary participation, you know the cores can remain the same and there is a level of how we apply it that needs to be updated, but the core values and the core of youth work can stay steady" (Jason, 711_0017, 21.03-21.33)	Core values
Abiding by the core values YWID2A	"I don't really know how to explain it but I think there is a 'youth workery' kind of thing about people. There's a professional that I work with that springs to mind, isn't a youth worker but I'd describe her as 'youth workery' and I don't know what that means but just about her approach, and her skills so yea I think there is a common language but I think there's more about common values really I suppose" (Jessica, 711_0050, 10.16-10.47)	Shared value base
Addressing equal opportunities YWID2B	"My introduction to it and it definitely shaped me because the group was predominately black and I think being part of a group then that was, you would be somewhere, you would be out of town sometimes and you would be racially abused so I think you know being part of that and witnessing that, that definitely shaped the type of youth worker that I am" (Ben, 711_0041, 05.51-06.10)	Influence of own experiences of oppression
Addressing equal opportunities YWID2B	"I could see that there were certain groups in the community that, that were missing out just from sort of either not having a voice or I think it's always been more about not being able to access services and not knowing things were available, you know, I think that's, that's something now that I still find happens. You know we're running a service for young people in schools, and regularly the young people won't know that we're in school or you know, won't know that there's youth workers in the community so yea I think that I was aware of those, those barriers" (Jessica, 711_0047, 08.00-08.33)	Understanding the barriers and promoting inclusion
Voluntary relationship YWID2C	"I think that for me one of the key things about, is making sure that it is called youth work, it is youth work and it does abide by the core values we've all talked	Young people choosing to be involved

	about, about being a voluntary relationship; the relationship's key to it, it's about empowering young people, you know, there is always equal opportunities, all of those things, which if it's about a young person coming to a group because they have to, because they are on a supervision order, that's not youth work" (Katherine, 711_0023, 21.06-21.32)	Core values
Voluntary relationship YWID2C	"It's a voluntary relationship they walk through the door, they come and go you know. I mean we do trips but it's about us starting off where they are at and finding out what makes them tick and giving them a bit of guidance for them to make better informed decisions in their life, that's what we are here for and give them opportunities, give them lots of different opportunities, we are not there to batter them at table tennis all the time" (Ben, 711_0044, 08.16-08.41	Young people choosing to be involved. Starting where the young person is at.
Empowering Practice YWID2D	"You start where the young person is at and it's very free flowing and organic and the young person comes to you and an opportunity arises and like this is an available opportunity to do a great piece of youth work and you go with the flow and the more we go down the target-driven and prescriptive approach, the less flexibility you have to do those kind of things and follow just what's, what's relevant for that young person at the time" (Andy, 711_0032, 04.49-05.16)	Starting where the young person is at
Empowering Practice YWID2D	"Empowerment I think underpins, well, all of these underpin youth work. Empowerment you know giving young people the opportunity to take, to make positive choices and informed choices about their life" (Victoria, 711_0038, 06.45-07.01)	Young people making informed choices
Holistic view of education YWID2E	"I think we put too much store on fitting young people into boxes; they should be at this, this level at this age, at that level at that age and you know and you should yea, you've got to do your, your core subjects but maybe and I think it is starting to come out now, we're looking at do more practical skills with you know looking at a young person as an individual and looking at their individual needs and then maybe tailoring their education to that need" (Nicola, 711_0052,13.50-14.20)	Person centred education
Holistic view of education YWID2E	"You are always trying to justify what you can do or what you are doing against a policy rather than saying this is just good for young people because it is good for young people, like for education I think of saying, get educated not because it will get you a job, it will and that will maybe increase your life chances and give you a healthier lifestyle because you might have more money to be able to afford to eat better or whatever you know, you know, but being educated just stimulates your brain, it just helps, it's good for you; you know just do it because it can be enjoyable, it can be fun" (Carl, 711_0022, 16.22-17.03)	Education for life

Professional ethos YWID2F	"Whilst we are professional, we have professional qualifications to prove that, but it's not about that; it's about our professional attitude to our work. We're committed and I think that's one of the things that youth workers would say we are. It's not for most youth workers, it's not a job; it's something that they believe in; it's something that they do" (Nicola, 711_0055, 04.37-04.58)	Commitment to being professional
Professional ethos YWID2F	"I think there is an element of and if you are not challenging yourself and your work then you are getting too comfortable and it's not, you're not willing to push forward because there is always more work to do, there's no shortage of young people to work with, and no shortage of issues" (Jason, 711_0015, 20.25-20.37)	Commitment to being professional Focus on work with young people

Overarching theme YWID 3: 'Leading at the same time as serving- knowledge, skills and roles in practice'

The third category **'Leading at the same time as serving- knowledge, skills and roles in practice'** consists of eight major themes.

Knowledge of the realities of young lives: The youth workers were knowledgeable about issues affecting young people and in particular, pointed out how social media appeared to be contributing to additional stress in young lives.

Building relationships with young people and in the community: This substantial theme pervaded all strands of practice with young people, members of the community and networking with other agencies. Workers referred to trust, respect and congruence as essential qualities in building effective professional relationships.

Being an informal educator: The participants worked as informal and social educators. They used learning opportunities as they arose to help young people learn and reflect on their experiences.

Youth worker skills in practice: The accounts suggested workers' social and organisational skills were often complemented by expertise in the arts or sports. A capacity to improvise by being creative and flexible in evolving work situations was also noteworthy.

Facilitating project and group work processes: The workers managed and facilitated projects and group work that responded to young people's needs. This sphere of professional expertise drew on skills in interpersonal communication and understanding of group work dynamics and processes.

Listening, advocacy and range of one to one work: The workers laid stress on the importance of attentive listening for this enabled young people to confide in them and receive support. The workers were typically acting as advocates, mentors, providing a sounding board for young people or 'signposting' them towards additional sources of support. They had experience of providing a safety net for young people in crisis.

Managing administration: Workers spoke of the increasing volume of administration that was now required as part of their job. It appeared to reduce the amount of time available for direct work with young people.

The diversity of work roles: The accounts of youth work practice included instances of a great variety of activities in a typical working week. This led many participants to portray youth work as a 'diverse and unique' occupation.

Overarching theme: YWID 3 Leading at the same time as serving- knowledge, skills and roles in youth work practice This category is comprised of eight major themes:-			
A Knowledge of the realities of young lives	**B Building relationships with young people and in the community**	**C Being an informal educator**	**D Youth worker skills in practice**
The stress of adolescence	Building helping relationships	Informal and social education	Creativity, flexibility and adaptability
Example: issues arising from use of social media	Networking in the wider community	Experiential learning	Social and organisational skills
	Relational building qualities – respect, empathy, honesty		Specific skills as in the arts, health education and sport
E Facilitating project and group work processes	**F Listening, advocacy and range of one to one work**	**G Managing administration**	**H The diversity of work roles**
Project work	Attentive listening	Increasing admin	Diverse work roles
Group work	Being an advocate		Managing staff and resources
	One to one work – mentoring, signposting		
	Providing a safety net		

Two extracts of data associated with each major theme appear in the table below:

Theme	**Example of data**	**Coded as**
Knowledge of the realities of young lives YWID3A	"If you put exams, being somewhere where you don't always want to be and being an adolescent into that mix and then we wonder why some of them struggle, so I think it's about being aware of, of all the pressures that are on young people and being aware that they've all got pressures but they deal with it differently" (Jessica, 711_0049, 06.28-06.48)	The stress of adolescence
Knowledge of the realities of young lives YWID3A	"I sometimes think that I am so glad I am not a young person now, because some of the things that they have to deal with, I mean the introduction with all the social networking with all the cyber bullying and things like that, material things and the BBM with the bullying, there, there's, there's a lot of pressure on young people…The BBM with the blackberry messaging which is instant messaging for young people so they don't need the credit; you know they could be involving half of Thornville in a	Example: issues arising from use of social media

	message on a phone and it causes a lot of trouble so I do think the issues for young people now are very different to when I was a young person, and they're quite more, it's more malicious. I definitely wouldn't want to be in some of the situations that some of the young people have been in and again that strengthens me as a professional because I am being introduced to things that are coming up for young people and I am like- wow, this wasn't happening when I was a young person" (Victoria, 711_0037, 06.07-07.10)	
Building relationships with young people and in the community YWID3B	"And it's a case of, you know, if, if you can work with a young person and build a relationship with them, build a stable relationship, it, it gets to a point where they're, you know, they're able to talk about anything to you if they want" (Peter, 711_0020, 16.30-16.46)	Building helping relationships
Building relationships with young people and in the community YWID3B	"You are kind of like a part of the furniture in terms of the community, or you need to be" (Andy, 711_0020, 05.53-05.59)	Networking in the wider community
Being an informal educator YWID3C	"That is the basis for youth work really isn't it, social education is, yeah. I was talking about informal education before, but without a doubt, even when you are just doing sort of like a leisure type activity with no obvious education element, though I would argue that there is always, always include an education element in it, but quite often that is social education is just about communicating and about working together" (Katherine, 711_0022, 11.54 - 12.07)	Informal and social education
Being an informal educator YWID3C	"I've still not lost giving people the opportunity to be themselves and to learn themselves, to, to give them experiences that will shape them or help shape them or do something" (Nicola, 711_0054, 00.36-00.57)	Experiential learning
Youth worker skills in practice YWID3D	"(A) youth worker must have social skills to be anything of value, to do a quality of youth work you have to be able to have that otherwise it is not going to work" (Jade, 711_0023, 00.51-01.02)	Social and organisational skills
Youth worker skills in practice YWID3D	"Everyone has got a mortgage to pay at the end of the day so we do need paying, but if you are in it for that, yeah you are not going to have this inventiveness, you are not going to have this creativity, the drive, the excitement, you're not going to want to make it fun, because you are turning up to do a job" (Carl, 711_0021, 14.00-14.15)	Creativity, flexibility and adaptability
Facilitating project and group work processes YWID3E	"I try to instil in the team, it's like look your project you own that you know, if I tell you go and do this; here, go and deliver this project, if you don't buy into it and feel like you are just doing it for because I have said, then what is your delivery going to be like, what are the young people going to get out of it	Project work

	but if you've got a passion about a project, then you're driving it and you've got hold of it I'll support you to you know, but take ownership. I know it's a bit Marxist but I just think you get more when you own your labour than when you're told what to do" (Ben, 711_0045, 14.08-14.46)	
Facilitating project and group work processes YWID3E	"I think that takes us down how many different roles a youth worker or hats we wear in the managerial end as such, where we are running a group, funding the group, going to the meetings about the group, going to the individual things about the group, tracking and CAF*ing a group and you, the list goes on; finding accreditation for the group, running the accreditation, dealing with the accreditation and through all that there's an element there of where formal and informal does clash and maybe that conversation does have to happen" (Helen, 711_0014, 19.00-19.33; CAF* Common Assessment Framework to Safeguard Children)	Group work
Listening, advocacy and range of one to one work YWID3F	"Then the other thing for me is to actually sit there and, as you said before, just listen because they are fed up of getting spoken to, they just want somebody to listen to how they're feeling; so it's just for me I walk away every time just so lifted, thinking I've only give them an hour of my time but look at the smiles on their faces walking out. The fact that I have just been able to sit there and listen and not talk over them" (Jade, 711_0020, 01.22-01.45)	Attentive listening
Listening, advocacy and range of one to one work YWID3F	"I run a voluntary sector youth club and we have the police come in on a regular basis because there have been issues in the village; you have shop-keepers talking to you, you have residents' groups coming in and saying 'your kids are this, that and the other; this, that and the other' and you're having to stand up for the kids and say, 'No, they're not; come and see, come and get to know them; come and see what you think.'" (Philip, 711_0020, 05.12-05.31)	Being an advocate
Managing administration YWID3G	"And then you go a bit higher and now it's just paperwork and stressing over money, because you need to do this and you need to do that and at the minute I just find it frustrating" (Jade, 711_0019, 10.37-10.46)	Increasing admin
Managing administration YWID3G	"I always feel that I should be doing more, I should be working with more groups, so I end up doing lots and lots of stuff and what goes isn't the quality of the youth work, it is that admin time to produce those reports and justify the work I'm doing" (Andy, 711_0022, 17.28-17.39)	Increasing admin
The diversity of work roles YWID3H	"I was having the same conversation with somebody the other day. Someone came in to talk to me about some stuff we want to do with the young people over the next few months and ten minutes before, I had been up on the roof because	Diverse work roles

	we've got a leaking roof, so I had been brushing all the water off the roof and then thinking 'oh, it's ten to three, I've got a meeting at three o'clock', so you're getting off the roof, cleaning yourself up and getting yourself ready to go into a meeting where you have actually got to sit and think about the developments of the programmes but ten minutes before you have been up thinking, please stay, you know, please roof don't collapse, let's keep this building open, and you are just thinking that is how varied the role is, it's, it's amazing; I don't know any other profession where it is like that" (Philip, 711_0020, 10.32-11.06)	
The diversity of work roles YWID3H	"The policies and guidelines that we have to abide by or adhere to or work within that framework, I know why they're there and I do work within them because we have got or I as a manager I've got to keep the team safe, I've got a responsibility to keep myself safe and that's you know safe from anything, physical or emotional or any abuse or accusation but also I've got that responsibility towards the young people as well by keeping them safe" (Nicola, 711_0055, 07.29-08.00)	Managing staff and resources

Appendix 13: Supplementary descriptive evidence to support thematic analysis in chapter 6 (YWID 4-6)

The major themes are each described briefly below to provide points of reference and to aid consistency in determining the positioning of subsequent similar extracts of data:

Overarching theme YWID 4: 'Moving from practice tensions to practice wisdom'

The fourth category **'Moving from practice tensions to practice wisdom** consists of five major themes.

Misconceptions of youth work practice: Youth workers expressed frustration that professional youth work was often misunderstood in the public domain and by some line managers in multi-disciplinary teams. Furthermore, sometimes there was a policy mismatch when an agency's headquarters based outside the region was determining project priorities that did not always fit well with local needs.

Uneasy relationships with other agencies: Youth workers gave some examples of difficulties that had arisen in partnership work with other agencies. These miscommunications implied limited understanding of each other's working practices and priorities.

Tensions between police and youth work roles: In their accounts, youth workers described incidents they had witnessed when some police officers spoke in a derogatory fashion to young people. Some youth work initiatives to work in partnership with the police had limited success due in part to mixed expectations of each other's role and pressure on the police to expedite the anti-social behaviour policy within the community.

School-based youth work: from teething troubles to acceptance as professional colleagues: Youth workers were building trust with teachers and clarifying professional boundaries in order to support young people in formal education settings. They were involved in teaching on pastoral support programmes (PSHE); facilitating support groups; providing drop in facilities during the school day and working in partnership with the school nurse to support young people who were struggling. Some workers also used after school clubs to make contact with young people and contribute to the programme of activities.

Practice wisdom – what works in practice: This theme explores examples of professional expertise in the data. It shows how values such as being non-judgmental and skills in relating to young people, setting boundaries and helping young people learn can unfold in practice.

Overarching theme YWID 4: Moving from practice tensions to practice wisdom This category is comprised of five major themes:-		
A Misconceptions of youth work practice	**B Uneasy relationships with other agencies**	**C Tensions between police and youth work roles**
Low public profile	Lack of mutual trust	Mixed expectations of each other
Limited management understanding of youth work processes	Problems over referrals	Poor attitude of some police officers towards young people
Imposition of agency policies from outside the region		
D School- based youth work: from teething troubles to acceptance as professional colleagues		**E Practice wisdom – what works in practice**

Workers' misgivings about schools	Trusting the relationship
Being accepted and trusted by teachers	Starting where young person is at
Maintaining professional youth work roles and boundaries	Creating opportunities to learn from experience
Making initial contact with young people	
Providing a drop in support facility for young people in school and teaching PSHE	
Gaining recognition for the contribution of informal education in formal education settings	

Two extracts of data associated with each theme appear in the table below:

Theme	Example of data	Coded as
Misconceptions of youth work practice YWID4A	"It is hard to do everybody because my boss, my boss's boss I should say, is thinking every young person that attends our centre should do a star, [Outcome Star] and I am not even going to try and do it because there is no point, not that I want to rebel against like the manager, but it's not possible; it's not going to be good work. It is basically me going 'oh here we go, Joe Blogs did that'. No, I will do it with the young people who are interested and want to do it because then it is a measuring tool and it has had an impact" (Jade, 711_0023, 13.52- 14.23)	Limited management understanding of youth work processes
Misconceptions of youth work practice YWID4A	"A lot of the policy makers and the people who make policies and who give out the KPI's, our Key Performance Indicators, and such, such, such, they are all very much based down in London, and what's going down on in London is very much different to what is going on in Thornville and what the young people need and the young people's needs are going to differ from all over the place so sometimes what they're saying we should be doing with young people in Thornville it's a bit hmm, well you don't, you don't understand the needs of the young people here because they are very different to the young people there" (Victoria, 711_0037, 24.47-25.18)	Imposition of agency policies from outside the region
Uneasy relationships with other agencies YWID4B	"There is like huge trust issues, like I think probably on both sides like, as we were saying, like social workers, we don't trust that we are going to get a good social worker and they don't necessarily trust the work that we are doing either" (Ed, 711_0015, 07.30-07.45)	Lack of mutual trust
Uneasy relationships with other agencies YWID4B	"I think it shows that we've all had that experience where someone has refused a phone call. I've, I've had CAMS* at one stage, they wouldn't take a referral. I mean, they, they've improved since that, but they are like 'no, it has to be; it, it can't be from you. Can you convince the young person to go to a GP**? Can you convince the young person to do this', and I am like, 'no they are telling me that they went to their GP and it went terribly wrong and that is why they have come to me', and they are like 'oh sorry, you're	Problems over referrals

	not, you're a youth worker, we can't take a referral from you'" (*CAMS - Child and Adolescent Mental Health; **GP - General Practitioner of Medicine) (Jason, 711_0015, 07.00-07.27)	
Tensions between police and youth work roles YWID4C	"Policing because that's to me, that's to me one of the roles we often are expected to do but I think we absolutely shouldn't be expected to do and I think we wouldn't be expected to do it if police stopped starting to try and be youth workers because in my experience that is where I think the police have really erred" (Katherine, 711_0020, 13.49-14.07)	Mixed expectations of each other
Tensions between police and youth work roles YWID4C	"One of the workers was out a couple of weeks ago with a group of young men escorting them to the shop and the police pulled them over, was asking them why they were out of school and this, this, this and this, and spoke to the young men quite inappropriately, spoke to them like they were 'scum' as the worker described it, so in defence the young people became defensive then and you know, they weren't particularly very nice back and then an argument was ensuing. When the worker came back, the worker was very much, backed up the young people and how inappropriate it was for the police to be talking to the young people like this, and I think that's why, when youth workers can back up young people. You know, if it was anyone else they might be like 'watch who you are talking to; you are talking to the police; show them some respect' and stuff like that but I think the workers actually stood back and could see, observed what was going on the conversation" (Victoria, 711_0038, 13.30-14.35)	Poor attitude of some police officers towards young people
School- based youth work: from teething troubles to acceptance as professional colleagues YWID4D	"We've got to be very clear, with other professionals as much as anything, about this is why we're here. If other underlying things are happening that we can deal with, then that's great we'll do that but there are certain things that we don't do" (Jessica, 711_0049, 10.19-10.31)	Maintaining professional youth work roles and boundaries
School- based youth work: from teething troubles to acceptance as professional colleagues YWID4D	"We were doing Panna Cage Football[14] out in the community. I had this idea of taking a cage into a school, like running it for free, during PE lessons and stuff like that and basically pitched the idea to [names person and place]; he leads quite a big team and knows what's going on. I pitched this idea and he was like this is a really good idea, I'm a little bit gutted I didn't come up with it and it's kind of like I've had this idea, it's happened, it's been implemented, young people have really enjoyed it, and there has been loads of differences to it. It started off in one school and now in May we are going into five schools before	Gaining recognition for the contribution of informal education in formal education settings

[14] Panna Cage Football is a game played 1 v 1 or 2 v 2 people in an octagonal cage. A 'goal' is scored by passing the ball through your opponent's legs and collecting it on the other side.

	you run the sessions. So it is kind of like having an idea and people listening, that aren't youth workers and sort of like, just stuff like that, it's kind of like you're battling, it's not even you're battling for something, you just pitch your idea and it's listened to and adhered to and you're like, yea, good job, well done" (Scott, 711_0015, 17.43-18.43).	

Practice wisdom – what works in practice (1): 'Seeing that change in young people'	
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	"I suppose there's pieces of work that I've done that I look back on and think that was a great piece of work, doing a coast to coast cycle ride with young people…that was in the days when there was a bit more money around. We managed to get funding to get all the gear, the mountain bikes and helmets and we did 3 months with the young people in the evenings and at weekends, building them up to that point and seeing that change in young people from being, 'oh yea, I can mountain bike as far as anything' and actually they generally just cycle around their little estate to get them to, and then taking them out on a day, to cries of their being absolutely knackered after doing maybe 8 miles that day to then, at the end of it, them cycling 30 miles in a day, getting up the next day and doing it again and just their attitude, the change in them as, as a person seeing it, seeing them being that determined about something"
	Source of extract: Andy 711_0033, 03.05-04.07 YWID4E
Coding of worker's practice wisdom: Aims to broaden young people's horizons through innovative project (line 2); carefully prepares with the right equipment (lines 3-4); starts where young people are at, starts with their interest in cycling and level of ability (lines 6-7); builds on initial learning experiences (lines 8-9); supports young people as they change and achieve (lines 6, 11)	

Practice wisdom –what works in practice (2): 'Where is the learning?'	
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17	"I had a similar thing recently, a few of our intermediates, this is when they were out in the back area of the club, I turned me back for two seconds to pass another member of staff something, came back out and found that the fence panels had been booted out and I was like, 'what's gone on here?' Now my management committee's attitude is 'well, you should bar them, we don't want them back here' and that is a challenge as (is) managing your management committee and their expectations, whereas what I have actually done with them is, at the next week, said to them 'Right, come on, let's get that fence fixed', got the nails, got the hammer and we've put the fence back together. They won't wreck that fence again because they have had to work to put it back up. If I banned them, where is the learning? They just don't come back, they don't learn anything from it, they don't get anything from it but the management committee's attitude maybe is 'well, they won't damage anything else here again will they?', but there is no learning in that for them, whereas now they all turned up on Wednesday night, 'Right, we need to fix this fence, don't we?' 'Yea, come on, let's get it done', and all of them turned up and they were made up because I hadn't phoned their parents and like barred them and said why they were barred, and the fence is now back up, so everybody wins".
	Source of extract: Philip, 71_0021, 09.25-10.28 YWID4E

Coding of worker's practice wisdom:
Lists difficulties to overcome to achieve a win-win situation (lines 3-6); deals directly with the issue, inquiring rather than blaming (line 4); is in authority but not authoritarian, positions himself in the middle ground (lines 4-6); deals directly with the group to get a solution (lines 7-9); takes practical action to help young people learn from experience (lines 8-11) and emphasises importance of this learning (lines 10-13); works through his relationship with the group (lines 14-15); retains trust of young people (lines 15-16)

Overarching theme YWID 5: 'Changing times – diminishing funding and increasing managerialism'

The fifth category **'Changing times – diminishing funding and increasing managerialism'** consists of five major themes.

Cuts to service provision- loss of staff and projects: The severe cutbacks to youth services led to unprecedented numbers of project closures, staff redundancies and service reorganisations. Subsequently, the situation was envisaged as a battle ground with workers defending their service in a reducing pattern of provision. A minority suggested some responsibility for the cuts was attributable to youth work's failures to produce sufficient evidence of its worth.

The constant battle over funding: As funding difficulties continued, many youth projects competed to find external sources of funding and struggled to operate with little or no petty cash. Sometimes, funding grants fluctuated when evidence matched to indices of social deprivation appeared to suggest some districts were now slightly less deprived and therefore no longer eligible for financial support. As workers were improvising to augment their limited resources, some young people were becoming more politically aware of decision-making processes over the allocation of resources in their community.

The impact of targeting: The accounts provided examples of the prevalence of managerial practices that involved targeting certain groups of young people in 'hot spots' for time-limited pieces of work. This managerial preoccupation with the expediency of targeting was disruptive to the usual youth work practice of voluntary relationship-building with young people to provide support and informal learning as situations arose.

Distance travelled - the focus on outcome measures: The drive for accountability meant that measurement tools such as the 'Youth Star' and 'Outcomes Star' were in increasing use in youth organisations to measure 'soft outcomes' and the impact of youth work interventions. The workers shared instances of some benefits but also drew attention to difficulties they encountered in implementing the measures in practice. Their preference was for collating case studies of young people's development to contribute to qualitative evidence of youth work's value.

Professional dilemmas: The funding shortfalls and managerial practices were putting stress on workers' ability to abide by their professional values. Moreover, as some workers became more pragmatic and worked within the new frameworks to receive recognition, others sought to sustain their ethically-informed practices away from the limelight. Child protection was of continuing concern for it appeared that some unqualified adults who organised community youth activities had little understanding of basic safeguarding practice.

Overarching theme YWID 5: 'Changing times – diminishing funding and increasing managerialism' This category is comprised of five major themes:-		
A Cuts to service provision – loss of staff and projects	**B The constant battle over funding**	**C The impact of targeting**
Funding cuts and service restructuring	Budget uncertainty	Labelling young people as problems
Awareness of service shortcomings	Fitting into funding criteria	The unfinished piece of work
Blitz spirit		
D Distance travelled – the focus on outcome measures	**E Professional dilemmas**	
Measuring the journey	Child protection concerns	
Outcome Star	Sacrificing our ethics?	
Youth work of value		

Two extracts of data associated with each theme appear in the table below:

Theme	**Example of data**	**Coded as**
Cuts to service provision – loss of staff and projects YWID5A	"What's keeping me motivated I should say in me role at the moment, because as you know as all of us being youth workers, it is a bit hard with the redundancies, 'are we getting made redundant? Oh what's going on now?' But if you have got a good piece of work you can just battle on through all the dramas, and just carry on doing the work, that's how I feel anyway" (Jade, 711_0020, 03.06-03.27)	Funding cuts and service restructuring
Cuts to service provision – loss of staff and projects YWID5A	"I think the cut backs were going to happen anyway because of the whole situation and the climate, but I do think some areas of youth work weren't managed properly, the money wasn't managed properly" (Victoria, 711_0039, 03.25-03.38)	Awareness of service shortcomings
The constant battle over funding YWID5B	"I think money constraints are against us, I think that lots of projects now are either externally funded or funded short-term and I think that's really difficult, I think that's difficult; doesn't affect the amount of commitment I have but I find that difficult when thinking about plans and not being able to make a commitment, not being able to say this time next year, I want it to look like that" (Jessica, 711_0050, 06.49-07.18)	Budget uncertainty
The constant battle over funding YWID5B	"Because we are seen as being an affluent area, we're not seen as a priority, so we get limited funding. You apply for funding for things, 'well you're not a deprived area so you're not going to get it', and it's like 'well come and actually see who we work with, come and see what we do', and as well, 'yeah there needs to be stuff for the people from the affluent areas as well, who we cater for', but 'no, you don't need it; they're affluent, they don't need a youth club', and that's the constant battle that we're having to get funding in to keep the place running" (Philip, 711_0022, 05.26-05.55)	Fitting in to funding criteria

The impact of targeting YWID5C	"It's young people perceived as a problem who, who become the target so the ones who aren't engaging, the ones who are hanging around you know outside the shop, the Tesco or whatever it is, you then become Tesco's police in effect to go and get these off the streets and to engage with them" (Ben, 711_0045, 01.19-01.36)	Labelling young people as problems
The impact of targeting YWID5C	"Restrictions have come in in terms of what you can do, where you can do it, how much money your project has to run, that kind of and the targets that you're pushed to, to deliver on, that kind of informal young person coming back to you and saying 'ah I really want to get a job' well like I'm sorry I can't do that now, because I'm actually working in a different ward and I've got 250 young people to meet in that ward, I've got 40 positive referrals" (Andy, 711_0032, 03.33-03.59)	The unfinished piece of work
Distance travelled – the focus on outcome measures YWID5D	"I think the real youth work is the face-to-face youth work with the young people and monitoring their progression and looking, looking at the outcomes, you know. I know outcomes are target-driven and stuff but they also show you a young person's journey and barriers that you know they've overcome and issues that they've faced, that they've overcome to achieve positive outcomes" (Victoria, 711_0037, 03.01-03.27)	Measuring the journey
Distance travelled – the focus on outcome measures YWID5D	"There is a real reward in that in almost showing other adults that a young person can exceed the expectation that has been put on them, I think there is something and whether it is in a small way like actually they didn't kick off in the lesson, or the large way, they actually stayed with the coach, they didn't run off. The small battles and the large battles, when a young person actually, you kind of have faith in them and then they actually live up to your expectations or exceed them, that's nice, that is a reward as well" (Jason, 711_0015, 15.34-16.10)	Youth work of value
Professional dilemmas YWID5E	"If I go to a lot of dance workers and say, so how do you handle a child protection incident, they literally go 'what'? So it is just there, it doesn't mean anything; just face service, lip servicing, and that concerns me" (Helen, 711_0016, 16.21-16.34)	Child protection concerns
Professional dilemmas YWID5E	"You can see the glaring sort of problems with you know you're recognising some work that is not completely ethical, do you know what I mean, and that's, that's hard. OK, well should we sacrifice our ethics and sort of morals to get the job done and to be recognised for it and that's, that's a difficult challenge as well" (Greg, 711_0029, 02.53-03.18)	Sacrificing our ethics?

Overarching theme YWID 6: 'Being professional youth workers - where to now?'

The sixth category **'Being professional youth workers - where to now?'** consists of four major themes.

Views on professional standing: Youth work was envisaged as a fledgling profession that still needed to establish itself amongst mainstream professionals. Austerity and managerialism were putting pressure on the existing values and practice traditions of youth work.

Gatekeeping the field: There was concern to safeguard the youth work sector from attempts to de-professionalise it by misuse of the job title and the professional unsuitability of some workers. This led to arguments for a standardising body for youth work, the production of a good youth work guide by 'trusted expertise' and attention to raising the profile of youth work.

Views on national standing of youth work: Market forces were increasingly determining services for particular groups of 'problem' young people. Government policies of 'Positive for Youth', 'Big Society' and 'NCS' appeared to have little impact on generic youth work other than to reinforce its marginal positioning.

Professional contribution and legacy: The combination of biography and interests were often shaping youth work contributions and making a difference to young people. Service cutbacks had brought many of the remaining workers into leadership roles, where there was evidence of their continuing professional commitment and passion for youth work.

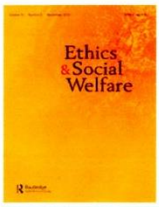
Overarching theme YWID 6: 'Being professional youth workers - where to now?' This category is comprised of four major themes:-		
A Views on professional standing	**B Gatekeeping the field**	**C Views on national standing of youth work**
A young profession	Professional suitability	Status of young people
	Misuse of job title	National youth policy: 'hands off' or 'passing the buck'?
D Professional contribution and legacy		
Making a difference		
Mentoring the next generation		
Pride in being a youth worker		

Two extracts of data associated with each theme appear in the table below:

Theme	**Example of data**	**Coded as**
Views on professional standing YWID6A	"The fact is maybe that we are not a mature enough discipline, historically that we haven't got that yet. Is it that that's what we need to look towards? We need to look towards this idea of establishing a trusted expertise, like the good pub guide, the things like that, do we need those, the equivalent but the good youth work guide, do we need that kind of thing, and we need to find people ourselves and go like let's put these people together and tell them to go tell us who's good" (Jason, 711_0017, 23.17-23.45)	A young profession
Views on professional standing YWID6A	"I don't think that youth workers are resistant to being seen as professional, I just think that maybe youth worker's professional identity is different to that of a teacher or social worker but I don't think it is any less valid you know. We're not just these mavericks that run round with big mad ideas, you know" (Jessica, 711_00477, 21.23-21.44)	A young profession
Gatekeeping the field YWID6B	"I think in some regards they are trying to de-professionalise it if you like so you don't need to be qualified to go and do this" (Ben, 711_0045, 04.53-05.02)	Professional suitability
Gatekeeping the field YWID6B	"If all these Big Society's groups and charities and anyone that seems to think, again we are back to that discussion about anyone can be a youth worker; it's a real concern, because it's not just about the service, it's also about protection of vulnerable, and the vulnerable comes in	Misuse of job title

	many forms not just in young people, you know, and that's, that's a massive concern" (Helen, 711_0016, 16.35-16.55)	
Views on national standing of youth work YWID6C	"It is playing a game, it's hard from a government perspective in some respects because you have got sixty million people that you're working with and governing and it is very difficult to have a relationship with that, but I think also there is a danger that you are so outside of what it is realistically like on a grass roots level that some of the things that governments come up with like the thing of voluntary work that young people were forced to do at college age… so it is basically involuntary, voluntary work, so how does that even work? So you are saying that you want them to do voluntary work, but they have to do it, so it's not voluntary work is it, and they are not getting paid for it, so is it free labour, like child labour, that is effectively what it is." (Scott, 711_0016, 20.07-21.18)	Status of young people
Views on national standing of youth work YWID6C	"It feels like it will be a bit wild west, it's like you know who will be the services there. There will be some third sectors that do amazing high quality work and there will be some charities that actually start taking short cuts and start having lone workers and unfortunately we know there will be some members of our society that will take advantage of that and equally there will be some statutory services which take short cuts in there" (Jason, 711_0016, 18.10-18.33)	National youth policy: 'hands off' or 'passing the buck'?
Professional contribution and legacy YWID6D	"A young woman from one of the schools left at the end of last term, she was 18… (I) went to their leavers' assembly and she brought her mum over and I remembered the young woman but it was when I first started so it was quite some time ago; …she brought her mum over, 'this is Jessica who's taught us all about how to be a good friend'. I thought that was, I can't measure that anywhere, I can't record that anywhere, you know, might be able to put it in a report but for me, that's, that's what we do. That's a huge impact for that young woman. I'm not saying nobody else would have done that and I'm not saying she wouldn't have learnt that along the way but that, that, that for me was, that's massive isn't it?" (Jessica, 711_0048, 05.02-05.43)	Making a difference
Professional contribution and legacy YWID6D	"Maybe that links to that stuff around in terms of value for money about the job that we do and the amount that we do, the fact that we do it for passion, that's what gives you value for money; it's well-trained good staff that are passionate about the work, not just the piece of paper because they, those people won't put the passion behind it" (Andy 711_0023, 03.22- 03.39)	Pride in being a youth worker

Appendix 14: '"Handing over our ethics?" Youth work conversations in times of austerity', Ethics and Social Welfare, 2016, Vol 10: 369-377



Ethics and Social Welfare

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 1749-6535 (Print) 1749-6543 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/resw20

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To cite this article: Paula Pope (2016) '"Handing over our ethics?" Youth work conversations in times of austerity', Ethics and Social Welfare, 10:4, 369-377, DOI: 10.1080/17496535.2016.1185795

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2016.1185795

ETHICS AND SOCIAL WELFARE, 2016
VOL. 10, NO. 4, 369–377
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2016.1185795

Routledge
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'"Handing over our ethics?" Youth work conversations in times of austerity'

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores a sample of youth workers' narratives in which ethical concerns over cuts to youth service funding was a prominent topic of conversation. It relies on data drawn from a qualitative inquiry into professional youth work practice that was contextualised by the austerity measures of the Conservative led Coalition Government in the United Kingdom (2010–15). The youth workers shared concerns that young people were being 'abandoned', expressed frustration over managerial systems and identified dilemmas over prescribed funding that might be construed as 'handing over our ethics' and at odds with their professional values and practice. A discursive analysis afforded glimpses of engaging narrative techniques and social interaction underpinning these accounts, and illuminates professional beliefs and debates, contributing to an 'accessible data archive' [Have, P. ten. 2007. *Doing Conversation Analysis*. 2nd ed. London: Sage] of this community of practice.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 4 January 2016
Accepted 29 April 2016

KEYWORDS
Youth worker narratives; austerity; ethical dilemmas; discourse analysis

Background

Youth work in the UK is an established profession that uses social and informal education processes with young people. Youth workers become professionally qualified through successful completion of nationally endorsed JNC[1] youth and community work programmes. These courses integrate academic study with fieldwork practice, equipping students with the skills and knowledge to work effectively in diverse youth work settings. Effective youth work involves reflective practice and commitment to ongoing professional development. For these workers, professional youth work is more than just being in the same setting as young people:

> Sometimes people think because they're working with young people, they must be youth workers and that's not the case; just because they're working with them it doesn't mean they're actually doing youth work. (youth worker, pilot study 2012)

This comment draws attention to lingering public misconceptions over the nature of youth work. On the one hand, there are those who see work with young people as providing positive activities embodying recreational and diversionary tactics, while on the other hand, others believe the profession of youth work is informed by the voluntary

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[1]JNC – Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth Leaders and Community Centre Wardens (LGA 2012)

relationship with young people, underpinned by educational and emancipatory values (Banks 2001; Davies 2005). The differing interpretations are compounded by recent cutbacks in youth service funding. Political expediency appears to infuse managerial practices that simplify and standardise youth work (and other public services) as commodities with measureable outcomes. For youth workers this creates a state of flux, positioned amid funding uncertainties, service reorganisation and accountability agendas that put pressure on their ability to maintain responsive services to local needs of young people.

Public funding of services for young people in the United Kingdom (UK) of Great Britain has been significantly reduced since the global economic recession of 2008. Prior to 2008, the combination of public and private funding in the UK underpinned a range of services for children and young people. Some of these services were provided directly by the local authority, with funding derived from central and local government sources, while a smaller second tier of organisations privately funded, operated for profit. A third tier was the well-developed 'third sector' that comprised voluntary and community work that was often grant-aided and operated as 'not for profit' organisations.

This mixed pattern of provision was severed in the late 2000s. In 2008, problems in financial institutions triggered economic uncertainty in Western economies leading to widespread recession. In Britain, political opinion differed on the way forward, evident in the debates that led up to the May 2010 General Election when the case for maintaining investment in services to rejuvenate the economy was countered by arguments for austerity measures to cut the national debt. The election of a Conservative-Liberal Democrat government for a five year term (2010–15) produced a coalition agreement on 'deficit reduction' (HM Government Coalition 2010, 5) heralding the onset of severe austerity measures across the public sector. Youth work with its weaker statutory base was an early casualty of the cuts.

Qualitative research into youth workers' narratives of practice

It was during this period I began to research youth workers' professional identities and discourses of practice. The research intention was to listen to youth workers' accounts of youth work, to explore their interpretations of everyday practice and bring those experiences into other domains. The research timing of the pilot coincided with these significant cuts in public spending leading to the closure of many youth projects. This social context positioned the participants, and contributed to the 'youth service funding cuts' discourse becoming a recurring topic of conversation, particularly at this preliminary stage of the research project. The pilot study involved recruiting five qualified and experienced youth work practitioners from three different youth work districts in the North West of the UK. It was a culturally diverse if small sample comprising both male and female workers of various ages who gave informed consent and participated voluntarily in the semi-structured focus group and interviews. The discussion prompts included an invitation to share 'some of the realities of your everyday youth work practice' and to describe 'any policy that is having an impact on practice'. The discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed, producing a rich resource of data. A thematic analysis drew out the prominent 'youth service funding cuts' discourse. Subsequent scrutiny using a discursive lens produced evidence of the youth workers' narrative dexterity as they spoke with fluency

and passion about their concerns and experiences. A synopsis of their views appears below, with the names of informants changed to protect confidentiality.

Four examples of youth workers' narratives were selected to illustrate ways in which they made sense of this issue. The first three extracts set the context. They indicate, firstly, that the cuts were perceived as widespread, 'cuts – right, left and centre'; secondly, that they were subsumed within ongoing reorganisation of public services, 'the first cut of your lawn'; and thirdly, that they percolated through to micro level management of working practices, 'a business case for stamps'. The fourth and final extract, 'handing over our ethics?' leads into a broader discussion of ethical implications coming to the fore in the wake of severe cuts to usual sources of youth service funding.

'Cuts – right, left and centre'

Extract 1	'Cuts – right, left and centre' (VN680051: 11.48–11.56).
Laura	'It's like the situation now though, isn't it in youth work, since youth services are being closed down, right, left and centre, aren't they, and kids are being abandoned, aren't they?'

In the first extract, the speaker expresses her opinion of the extensive nature of cuts to youth service provision. Laura uses the colloquialism 'left, right and centre' to imply that the cuts are happening everywhere and follows this by her persistent use of the interrogative, 'isn't it' and 'aren't they', which appears to seek corroboration from the group over this construction of events. She chooses an evocative word 'abandoned' to describe the impact of the closure of youth service provision. This word 'abandoned' has emotional overtones and suggests there is 'neglect' and a lack of care. Paying attention to Laura's emotional rhetoric enables the listener (and the reader) to apprehend some of the feelings infusing these events. The discourse may elicit emotional responses in the listener, creating moral awareness that leads to taking action, 'because we care'. The 'caring' dimension has been long associated with the emergence of people professions such as social work, nursing and youth and community work, whose roots lie in philanthropic action in Victorian Britain providing relief for the poor and infirm. More recently, Gilligan (2011) depicts the need for an 'ethic of care' as 'an ethic grounded in voice and relationships, in the importance of everyone having a voice, being listened to carefully (in their own right and on their own terms) and heard with respect'. This perspective encourages a listening stance that pays attention to both emotional and rational content in generating knowledge and understanding of situations.

There is substantive corroborating evidence that youth service provision was severely reduced at this time.

> Between 2010 and 2012, cuts to youth services averaged 27%. In 19 English councils, the reductions amounted to more than 50%. A handful of authorities axed their entire youth budget. (Butler, The Guardian, 30.4.2013)

In relative terms, these early cuts were unfair for they were inconsistently applied across public services and particularly disadvantaged one age group. This was acknowledged in the Education Select Committee Hearings into 'Services for Young People' in 2011, that reported on the 'very significant, disproportionate cuts to local authority youth services' (House of Commons 2011a, 3) showing that an undue burden had been borne by

the youth sector. Young people clearly understood what was happening to their services and protested vigorously at the time and subsequently. (See, for example, Basildon Recorder, 8.10.2013; Bath Chronicle, 23.9.2010; Birmingham Mail, 14.2.2011; NUS 2014; TUC 24.9.2012). The Education Select Committee also heard witness testimony that when young people objected to youth services cuts, their views were side-lined and lacked redress:

> One thing we find is that when young people speak against cuts in their services, local government is saying, 'It's not us. It is at national level that we are being told to make cuts.' Then when young people are talking nationally, they are told that 'the decisions are made at local government level'. They are finding that they are up against a brick wall. (House of Commons 2011b, Q46, LP)

The suggestion here is that in contrast to Gilligan's stance, young people are not being listened to with respect; their concerns are not being taken seriously. Since then, notwithstanding the Coalition Government's publication of its 'Positive for Youth' policy (HM Government 2011) and the strategy of the 'National Citizen Service' for 16–17 year olds as part of its 'Big Society' initiative, generic funding of local youth services has continued to wane.

'The first cut of your lawn'

In the second extract below, the speaker positions these funding cuts in the wider context of substantial reorganisation of local authority public services. It is an animated account in which Luke reports on his attendance at a 'change champion' meeting where budget cuts to public services appear to be aligned with the management of change. The repeated emphasis on 'restructuring' and 'restructured' draws the listener's attention to this aspect of the story.

Extract 2	'The first cut of your lawn' (VN680053: 2.16–2.52).
Luke	'The restructuring bit I, I know, when they say restructuring, it's, it's almost like a live document type restructuring because they had these change champions; I went to some of the change champion meetings; certain people saying 'oh it's not fair; this department's already been restructured so all the jobs that were available, they've been redeployed; there'll be none left for my department' and one of the directors said, 'don't worry about it, this is just, it's almost like a continuum. Just because that department's been restructured doesn't mean that's the end of it; it'll go round and they'll, it'll come back to them again', so that's just- I suppose it's like the first cut of your lawn in the summer, isn't it? It's going to be revisited again, and you know, cut again.'

Luke populates his story with other voices providing detailed conversation contributing to a belief that the speaker was present and these exchanges really happened, thereby making a persuasive case for their authenticity. However, his position may be contradictory in some aspects for, given he was there, an insider, he has distanced himself by reporting their speech using their words.

Luke develops the lawnmower analogy by referring to 'first cut of your lawn' that will be 'cut again', thereby offering a vivid comparison of the nature of the departmental cuts under the restructure. It appears that the process of cutting back is relentless, that whatever is in the way will be 'mown down' as the lawn mower comes round to make another round of cuts. The dismay of the 'oh, it's not fair' viewpoint does not feature further in this reconstruction of events. The lone voice concerned about fairness was perhaps reacting here to loss of jobs rather than to the impact of cuts on 'grass root' services.

The literal content of the account is disquieting. Is this how the cuts to staff and services are being managed? Is this ethical? Rowson (2006) posits the concept of 'FAIR' to signal key attributes of an ethical disposition, that involve Fairness, respecting Autonomy, having Integrity and leading to the most beneficial (or least harmful) results. Rowson argues that prioritising certain principles according to circumstances can be one way to deal with dilemmas. In this extract, it appears that the perceived greater good of implementing financial cuts to departments to save money has taken precedence over other considerations. It has triggered an unpopular policy of staffing cuts to be implemented with little redress. It has used the management strategy of creating 'change champions' from representatives of different departments to disseminate the policy. The manager's remark 'don't worry about it' seems an attempt at appeasement to pacify those present: pragmatism and appeasement appear as the prevailing traits memorably revealed in this exchange.

'A business case for stamps'

In the third example, the youth worker gives an example of how service cut backs have filtered through to supervision of the smallest items of spending:

Extract 3	'A business case for stamps' (VN680052: 13.27–13.38).
Luke	'You're having to do like a business case for everything; any time they want money for anything, whether it's even stamps, having to do a business case, you think, this is ridiculous you know, and you just haven't got the time'.

It reveals that tighter budgetary control is leading to micro-management of communication with the public. Making out a business case for stamps appears to be a form of accounting and regulation that sits at odds with the usual exercise of professional judgment in minor fiscal matters. The worker's frustration is evident in his remarks, 'this is ridiculous' and 'you just haven't got the time'. Luke's method of building his narrative between 'they' and 'you' uses a discursive style that implies resistance to this time-consuming 'efficiency discourse'. Youth work's ethos of informality and spontaneity in responding to young people's needs appears hamstrung by such measures.

'Handing over our ethics?'

In the fourth extract, the focus group discussion turned to the difficult choices that youth organisations face in the wake of funding cuts:

Extract 4	'Handing over our ethics?' (VN680053: 12.17–13.26).
Charlotte	I think it's a dilemma though that (*pause*) a lot, when you take on funding that you don't lose your fundamental ethics of youth work
Laura	Mm
Charlotte	and it is so easy to say, we'll take that because there's somebody's job there
Group	Mm, yes
Charlotte	That's at risk but actually if you then take it but you're not actually doing youth work, then we have to be really careful that we're not, we're not handing over our [our ethics =
Luke	[= selling our souls]
Charlotte	Yes and that is, a really difficult decision to make because it could be that as a result of not accepting
Group	Mm, mm

(*Continued*)

Continued.

Extract 4	'Handing over our ethics?' (VN680053: 12.17–13.26).
Charlotte	somebody becomes redundant, but it's that dilemma then, of well, but actually if we do that, that isn't youth work
Luke	mm
Charlotte	And are we the best people to do that if it's not youth work. So it is a real, it's a dilemma
Laura	It's getting the balance right, isn't it? (*pause*)
Researcher	Well somebody else may end up doing it and then it's still perceived as youth work even though we don't think it is. Yea it's quite-
Charlotte	But I think that as long as we, it's about us isn't it, upholding those ethics of youth work I think as a service, I think that's important, but that's not youth work so therefore we shouldn't be doing that.

The initial pacing of this story suggests that Charlotte is cautious about choosing the right words to put forward a difficult point of view. In brief, the dilemma she poses is that taking an ethical stance over atypical work with young people may mean losing funding for youth workers' jobs. In youth work terms, atypical work might be characterised as the difference between delivering 'packaged' programmes to comply with funding body requirements, rather than the active tailoring of meaningful learning in response to needs that emerge through voluntary relationships with young people (see Jeffs 2002).

The pattern of hesitancy suggested by the repetition of Charlotte's phrases leads to overlapping speech (indicated by the equals sign and bracket): another group member interposes his phrase 'selling our souls' to fit into Charlotte's narrative of 'handing over our ethics'. The passion inherent in the phrase 'selling our souls' suggests that there is much at stake here, hinting at a degree of complexity that may not be initially apparent. Charlotte resumes her account, clarifying and re-asserting her opinion that the onus of responsibility lies with the workers, emphasising that 'it's about us, isn't it' in her concluding remarks.

Setting out the sequence of dialogue draws attention to group interaction and the various contributing responses that jointly construct meaning in this story. The minimal encouraging responses of 'mms' imply there was recognition that this is a live issue that may create tension in accepting prescribed funding that requires working in ways that may be at odds with youth work values. It poses the question, what is the right thing to do in these circumstances? It is a professional dilemma that many youth workers are struggling with elsewhere, as Gill Hughes and co-authors reported following discussions with youth and community practitioners in the North of England in 2013:

> Youth workers are caught in a bind – they want to do the best for the young people that they work with whilst, at the same time, wanting to retain the very employment that allows them to do this and maintain funding to the projects that underpin the provision. Yet the requirements of the funding may jar with the core of their value system, producing incongruence which troubles their processes of reflexivity. (Hughes et al. 2014, 7)

Furthermore, as well as being topical, it is an ethical issue of long standing as Jeffs and Smith argue in their reflections on 'Resourcing youth work, dirty hands and tainted money' (2010).

This discourse 'handing over our ethics' fits what Davis (2003) has defined as a 'moral dilemma'. It is a predicament of moral significance with two equally unattractive options that appear to confront the worker. Later reflection may suggest it was not so cut and dried, but this does not offset the real difficulty felt at the time. Indeed the dilemma may be heightened by a concern about what will happen to the young people with

whom the worker is in relationship. Davis argues that working through these difficult moral decisions contributes to the formation of moral identity.

One view could be to consider the potentially positive outcomes that might arise from the youth worker's continued involvement in programmes that have prescribed funding. The worker may be able to create change from within, so that the 'youth work offer' reflects youth work principles and values. At its heart, such an offer derives from a belief that 'young people matter' (NYA 2014, 5) and so consciously building in processes that facilitate voluntary participation, informal education and social justice could be beneficial to young people. Given the overwhelming impact of service cuts, retaining professional youth workers somewhere in the community may enable sufficient attention to be given to young people's needs and interests in the delivery of services. This form of pragmatic compromise implies that circumstances may modify our ethical position, and coupled with concern over youth worker unemployment and threats to economic well-being, 'taking the money' and accepting the change of role may well prevail.

Nevertheless there are strong counter arguments. It may become increasingly difficult for the youth worker to fulfil contractual obligations to work in an organisation that ascribes to such different values and practices, where certain young people are targeted and funding relies on achieving measureable outputs in a given time frame. The duty of the youth worker employed in this changed context is presumably to deliver the agreed programme and not subvert it to achieve other ends. Being caught between managerial and professional concerns is likely to contribute to a state of professional unease.

There may be an interim position where workers may achieve some leeway through adopting an assertive stance in contract negotiation with funders and stakeholders. Such negotiations are likely to be informed by youth workers' professional expertise and contribute to wider discourses on young people. Such an approach suggests the possibility of revised contracts that enable contingency planning, flexibility and spontaneity in responding to emerging needs in the age group. It may also be that instigating such conversations about contractual changes provide opportunities to explain the nature of professional youth work practice, to challenge negative stereotyping and advocate on behalf of young people. Moreover, by doing so, youth workers show adherence to the guidelines on 'Ethical Conduct in Youth Work' and its professional principle to 'foster and engage in ethical debate in youth work' (NYA 2000, 5.2.4).

The present economic realities suggest that youth workers and their agencies will continue to face dilemmas over sources of funding for the foreseeable future. Given that youth workers are among those occupations informed by 'professional ethics', there may be little room for manoeuvre. Being truthful and reliable are among the character traits or virtue ethics depicted as 'a good way to be' (Hursthouse 1999, 13). They require congruence between private beliefs and public behaviour in terms of commitment, honesty and accountability to underpin any claims for professional integrity and credibility. If youth workers profess these virtues, then it may appear there is only one ethical option in the circumstances: if the youth workers take the funding and practise a diluted form of youth work, they may do harm to the professional relationship with young people, and trust in the profession, thereby putting at risk the moral values they claim to hold.

Concluding remarks

The post-recession economic climate in Britain leading to the advent of the Coalition Government gave impetus to the perceived greater good of implementing financial cuts to public services and, in the short term, dispensed with blocks of service provision for young people. It was widely recognised that this reduction in public funding of youth services was 'disproportionate' (House of Commons 2011a). Moreover, it suggested a lack of 'fairness' that Rowson (2006) envisaged as a key component of an ethical disposition. This inequality in the re-distribution of resources implied that young people's needs (and their own views about those needs) carried less weight than the voices and needs of other social groups. These disappearing forms of youth provision can be described as a 'social right' for they fit the definition provided by Rowson (2006) of being customarily available in the community. They were services that concurred with explanations of entitlement described as 'a sufficient local offer to young people' (NYA 2014). The National Youth Agency is among those continuing to make the case for shared local and central government investment in order to provide sufficient service provision for young people.

The study draws attention to the views of a small group of professional youth workers, providing an insider perspective on some of the moral dilemmas facing youth workers. Their accounts shed light on the dominant 'funding cuts' discourse that appeared to impact on everyday working practices contributing to a drift in professional identities. The selected extracts suggest that youth workers felt strongly about the impact of the austerity measures on young people, who were being 'abandoned', and on themselves who were confronted with 'selling our souls'. These emotional words suggest the degree of ethical concern amongst these practitioners. The use of a narrative approach was helpful in eliciting youth workers' stories of their experiences, showing ways in which informants actively use language to construct accounts representing those experiences. As such they contribute to an 'accessible data archive' (Have 2007, 96) of the profession at this time.

Acknowledgement

I wish to thank the study participants for their interest and willingness to contribute to this pilot study.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

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Appendix 15: Supplementary data extracts to support discursive analysis in Chapter 7

No.	Theme	Supplementary data extracts
7	Leading and serving (YWID3C)	'Being an educator'
8	Changing times (YWID4E)	'Changing lives'

Supplementary Discursive Extract 7: 'Being an educator'	
Andy 1 2 3	Have they [the government] not been saying recently as well that they're finding there is a gap in young people's abilities, their social skills, so they've got all these great qualifications but (.1) their ability=
Andy 4 Carl 5	= [to work] = [They go for a job interview and they can't (.)
Group 6	((laughter))
Carl 7	they don't know what's going on
Andy 8	Yea=
Katherine 9	That's the basis for youth work really isn't it=
Carl 10	=Yeah=
Katherine11 12 13 14	=social education is, yeah I mean I was talking about informal education before, but without a doubt, even when you are just doing sort of like a leisure type activity with no obvious education element, although I'd argue that there's always=
Carl 15	=There's always something=
Katherine16 17 18 19 20 21 22	=you always include an education element in it, but quite often that is social education just about communicating and about working together and about (.) not being horrible to that person next to you, and (.1) erm you know about speaking clearly, just stuff like that; that's, that's what youth workers do, when, like you say, you build that relationship, that's what, that's the sort of thing that you can help develop because you have got their <u>trust</u> and because they have respect for you (.) really.
Jade 23 24	Yea, I think the government take everything that Katherine was saying then (.1) as a given, so they expect young people <u>just</u> to be able to socialise,
Group 25	Mm
Jade 26 27 28 29 30	<u>just</u> to be able to get that job, and <u>just</u> to be able to do this, where (.) they can't; they need that little bit of encouragement and if they are not getting it from home or friends, family, what have you (.) there is that place to go where we can help whichever thing it could be, we can help that in some sort of educational way, and whether they know they are getting educated or not (.)
Group 31	Mm=
Jade 32	=we are educating them (.4)
Thornville focus group, question 4, 'the influence of government policy on your practice'; 711_0022, 11.42-13.08	

	Notes on supplementary discursive extract 7
1	Discursive example of YWID3C: - 'being an informal educator'

2	Conversation analysis: Turn-taking (Sacks et al. 1974); latched response (Jefferson, 1984,17); audible stress of word 'just' to create emphasis; 3-part list in repetition of 'just' (Wooffitt, 2001, 61); use of listener receipt tokens in 'mm'; Katherine & Jade use brief pauses to create emphasis; discourse markers (Schriffin, 2001) - "so", "I mean", which also act as 'causal linkages' (Gergen, 1994), that is, conjunctions that link talk together, see especially their use in lines11-22 with "but", "even", "although" "when", "because"; Repetition of "always" between speakers (lines 14-16) Overall this sequence shows clear social interaction to co-construct the talk
3	Figures of speech: build –metaphorical use of verb 'to build' that youth workers commonly associate with the activity of developing relationships
4	Narrative analysis: Story line: Jade's talk shows repetition that links different parts together as she picks up on (1) Andy's reference to the government (they); (2) Carl's reference to 'job' and (3) endorses Katherine's point. Jade's contributions suggests 'stable identity' by repetition of 'help' and 'educational/ educated/ educating'. Jade's storyline shows she 'selects events relevant to endpoint' (Gergen, 1994, 250) and establishes a valued endpoint' (ibid). Pause at end of her talk confirms this is the end of this sequence Use of 'I' statements asserts Katherine's presence in the narrative (line 11)
5.	Identities and practices: Simple and clear description of informal and social education role; shows 'stability of educator' identity (Gergen, 1994, 251); reference to practices of 'building youth work relationships', working with values of 'trust' and 'respect', 'supportive helping role', providing a space/ place for young people Positions youth work as a role for young people outside their 'home, friends or family'
6.	Additional notes: Possible distancing of government by use of "they" compared to youth worker as "we", though young people are also referred to as "they".

Discursive Extract 8: 'Changing lives'	
R. 1 2 3	First of all, I am asking you really, what are some of the most memorable experiences you have had as a youth worker? (.) Ones you are prepared to tell me about ((chuckles))
Ben 4 5 6	Er, I remember erm (.) there was one residential (.3) we took a group up to Yorkshire and (.) the group didn't know each other, there was maybe two out of the group knew each other and maybe another two might have knew each other but
R. 7	Mm=
Ben 8 9	=it was a group of (.) was it 8 lads, and we took them up to Yorkshire, and erm, (.) personal development residential so
R.10	Mmm=
Ben11	=You know 10 til 10, so 10 in the morning 'til 10 at night
R. 12	Mmm
Ben13 14 15 16 17 18	you know, here is what we're doing, like that, so a lot of confidence, erm team building, moral dilemmas, <u>lots</u> of stuff, erm (.2) and they absolutely, I mean- what I just generally find residentials are (.) quite successful because the barriers come down, people speak more open (.) and er it was a fabulous, fabulous residential, it went really well. And erm (.2) about a year later (.) I was- I was in my local pub (.) in [names place] and erm one of the young people who was on the residential come

19 20 21 22 23 24	in (.2) and he was old enough to drink then and er, he's saying to me [gives nickname], everyone calls me [nickname], no one really calls me Ben, he said [nickname] 'that residential changed my life' (.2) So I, I was really fascinated then and I said, I said 'why? What was it about it?' And, you know, and he said, 'it was the things that we done, them (sic) exercises really made me get to know meself' (sic)
R. 25	Hmm
Ben26 27 28	'and it made me make choices in life', and he'd, he'd started university and (.1) ((taps table)) and he'd done really well and I suppose for me it was that (.2) you know, I ca-
R.29	Hm=
Ben30	=I can remember the residential but=
R. 31	=Mmm=
Ben32	=it was this guy coming up afterwards and saying that
R. 33	Mm=
Ben34 35	=and it was just like saying 'yes, this works, this youth stuff, this works; this is how (.) we can change lives, this is how we can=
R.36	=Mm=
Ben37 38	=inspire'. you know what I mean, just by creating (.1) you know a framework and allowing young people to, to learn
R.39	Mm
Ben40	as we are learning as well you know so that's, that's one of me sort of favourites
R.41	Mmm
Interview, question 4, 'Memorable youth work experiences', 711_0043, 00.06-02.17	

	Notes on supplementary discursive extract 8:
1	Discursive example of YWID4E: - 'Practice wisdom – what works in practice'
2	Conversation analysis: Turn-taking (Sacks et al. 1974); latched response (Jefferson, 1984,17); audible stress of word 'lots' to create emphasis; repetition of 'this' to create emphasis; brief pauses and 'ers' in structuring the story; discourse markers (Schriffin, 2001) - "so", "I mean"; Many listener response tokens of 'mm' acknowledge points in speaker's account; increasing use of response tokens towards close of the account.
3	Figures of speech: imagery of 'barriers coming down', being 'open'
4	Narrative analysis: Develops story with a beginning, middle and end Tells story from different positions; animates the story by using young man's words as well as repetition of 'I' (lines 21-22) as an active participant in the story (subject positions, Davies and Harré, 1990); The speaker also makes an aside in line 20 to the researcher Sets the scene and leads up to dramatic moment- 'that residential changed my life'; Story-telling- ordering of events, with causal linkages, selecting events relevant to the endpoint, establishes a valued end point (Gergen, 1994, 250-252) Gives a moral/ purpose to ending his tale in his affirmation of youth work
5.	Identities and practices:

	Brief description of youth work role facilitating learning on residential; shows ‘stability of learner’ identity (Gergen, 1994, 251) for young people through youth work and also for the youth worker. ‘Making a difference identity’ - speaker presents it as memorable to have received this first-hand evidence from a young man of the real difference this youth work practice made (atypical data- as the outcome is not always known because young people move on)
6	Additional notes:

Appendix 16: Participants' feedback on the research process

Focus group participants' written feedback:

The remarks below were handwritten individually and anonymously on feedback forms by the participants at the end of the focus groups:

Focus group feedback- Highbury (5)		
Good process Nice size group Good open questions Clear communication.	Good experience once here. Bit of confusion of knowing where to go on arrival. Would have been good to know who is coming to help with transport.	Great group and raised interesting things and has got me reflective thinking.
No feedback from one person	Good, informative, good conversation, good participation, well-chaired.	

Focus group feedback- Thornbury (7)		
Very good opportunity to network and share experiences.	Very useful, interesting and informative. It's always good to know our experiences are not unique!	It was a great experience! Very well led/ directed, helpful info, room for discussion, and all info was good ahead of time. Great to sit and chat and reflect (and be challenged) by like-minded people. Many thanks for a great use of time.
Really enjoyed listening as well as sharing experience and views with like-minded people.	It has been really useful and interesting to hear other people's views and experiences of their youth work.	
Very interesting and enjoyable.	Really enjoyed it, to hear about other people's values of youth work.	

Interviewees' audio-recorded feedback:

All the interviewees said that the meeting place was suitable for them.

The data below gives interviewees' responses to the research question: "how has this interview process been for you"?

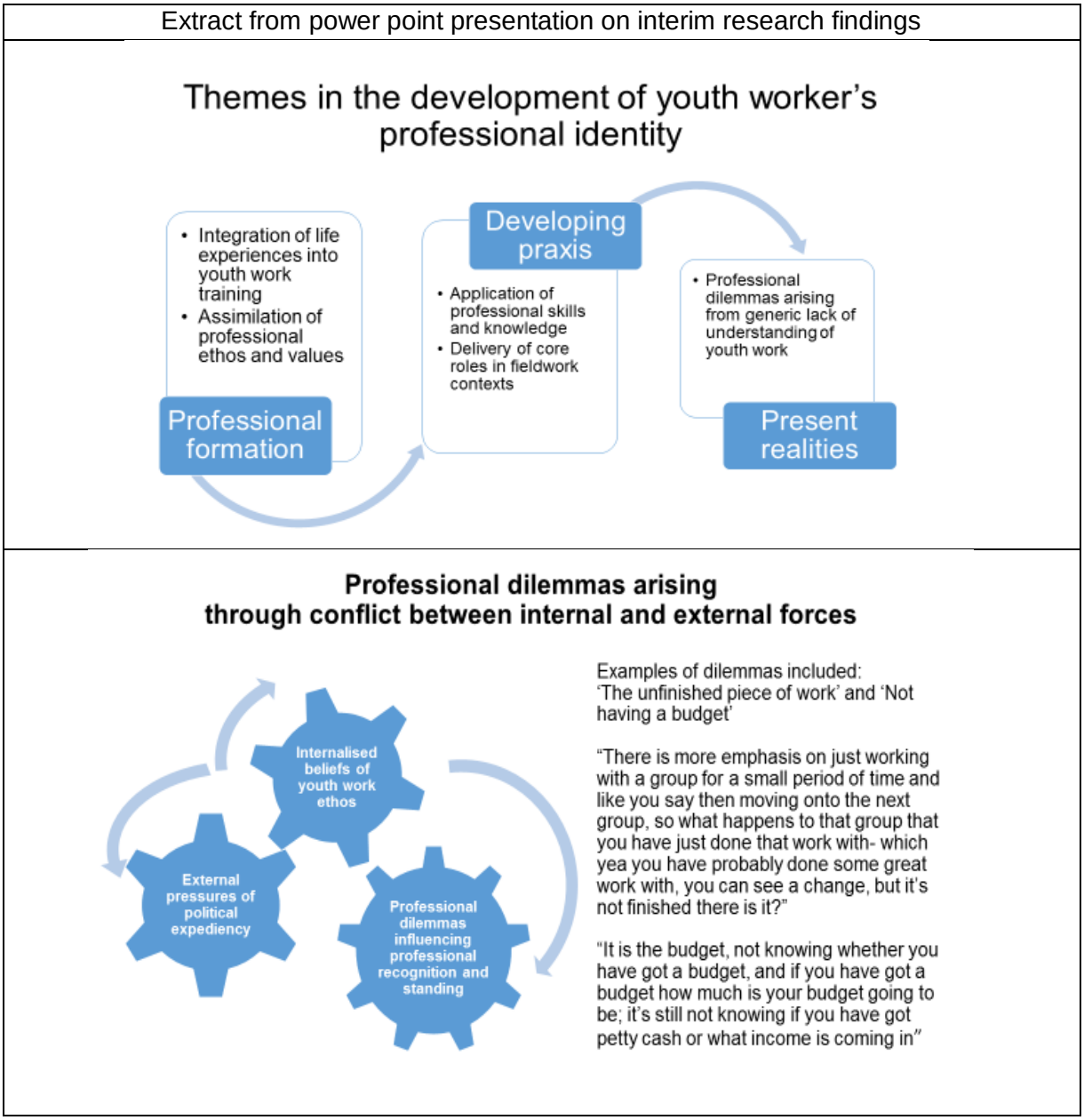
Note: The initials on the table below are used to represent the Interviewee (I), Researcher (R) and Main study participant (M).

Table to show interviewees' feedback to the interview process	
M6	I: "It's been really difficult, you feel like, I mean you feel like you're under pressure to have the answers for understanding what it is we do and why we do it, the policy behind it, maybe that's just me personally - I don't have all the answers - I'm finding my way but it's been really good because it's a bit like, not like having a counselling session but the questions you've asked it's made me think about particular things like [names person] and what, where do I want to be when I've got 30 years in, you know what do I want the workers that have worked under me, what do I want them to think of me? Maybe that's, you know, I may have chopped the hair off but I'm not going to become a suit" (711_0036, 07.21-08.05).
M13	I: "It's been fine, no problems really, I mean I think the discussions we've had and the things I've said they have been sort of discussions that I've had and thoughts I've had with different people so they have been formulated over the last sort of two years I think, and you have that discussion, and I suppose you have your moaning

	sessions with your colleagues don't you? And you think what is happening here? I don't really understand it and you know, the way you have conversations, and by the time you have had that conversation about three or four times you've come up with the conclusive sort of conversations that's put it all to rights, so I think it is a case of that you know " (711_0030, 00.42-01.29).
M14	I: "It's been smooth and it's been enjoyable, yes" R: "And how come it's been enjoyable?" I: "Because it's enabled me to reflect on some of my practice as well and discuss youth work with someone who knows a lot about youth work, which is quite rare now because as I pointed out before, there's sixteen people who I work with and only three of us are actually qualified in youth work so it's been nice to discuss proper 'youth worky' stuff because I think once you move away from university and you come into an organisation, it's very much you leave that stuff there, it's only now and then like the Donald Schön 'reflection in and on action' that you actually think about stuff like that so yes I have enjoyed the interview process" (711_0040, 00.07-01.04).
M15	I: "It was good Paula. Yea, I was talking to somebody last night actually about this; I said what it will probably be is questions which you've got to think a little bit, they are not questions where you can just go du, du, du. And that's what I've enjoyed about it, I have had to think about it, I have had you know to try and recollect and, but you know, it's given me, it's almost been like a bit of a self-assessment you know what I mean, that's what I'm, when the questions are coming and hearing how the answers are coming out, so yes, I have enjoyed it. It's made me sort of analyse and it's given me a bit of reflection like I said, I am not getting supervision at the moment so I haven't got that because sometimes all you need is to just throw (it) out there isn't it, articulating it sometimes makes you understand it better doesn't it?...So for me, I think this has been a good learning experience and that's before beer" (711_0046, 06.20-07.42).
M16	I: "I think it's quite a luxury for somebody to give you the time to say, you know, what you do, what's it look like, you know and especially at times like this, because we are all running round, we are all pushed for time, so it's nice to have a little bit of time to think about how things look" (711_0051, 08.10-08.27).
M17	I: "I hope that was useful" R: I think it was all very useful and interesting. So how was the interview process for you?" I: "It was fine, it was relaxed" R: "Relaxed? You don't feel you've been interrogated?" I: "No, not at all" (711_0056, 00.01-00.12).

Appendix 17: Extract from presentation: 'Hitting the ground running- today's youth work realities' (Pope, 2016c)

Extract from power point presentation on interim research findings



Appendix 18: Index of acronyms used in the thesis

CA	Conversation Analysis
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
ESC	Education Select Committee
FGQ1	Focus Group Question 1
IDYW	In Defence of Youth Work
Infed	Informal Education website
IQ1	Interview Question 1
IYW	Institute for Youth Work
JNC	Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Workers
NAYC	National Association of Youth Clubs
NCS	National Citizen Service
NCVYS	National Council for Voluntary Youth Services
NYA	National Youth Agency
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
ONS	Office for National Statistics
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
SOC	Standard Occupational Classification
TAG	Training Agencies Group of the Professional Association for Lecturers in Youth and Community Work
TYW-REYS	Transforming Youth Work – Resourcing Excellent Youth Services
YWID	Youth Work Identity
YWID1A	Youth Work Identity, First major theme, theme A