Learning about equality:

A study of a generic youth work setting

by

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DECLARATION

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PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THIS WORK

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Abstract

The concept of equality has been established as an underpinning value base in youth work literature. Yet, equality is also recognised as a complex concept that includes perspectives on rights, social justice and egalitarianism which are variously applied in youth work. Young people's experience of equality in generic youth work is under-researched. This ethnographic case study aimed to examine how young people involved in generic youth work perceived and experienced equality there, in order to consider whether youth work helped them to learn about equality.

This research involved studying the experiences of 17 young people over two years. I chose a single case setting, in a new town within a Scottish local authority that was known for innovation in youth work development. In addition to interviews, I observed young people in a range of locations: café, computing room, disability sports, games hall and rehearsal studio.

Mertens' (2005) transformative paradigm was the underpinning theoretical framework for analysis that provided empirical evidence of the reasons young people gave for attending youth work and their perspectives and experiences of equality in this case setting. The study not only confirmed that youth work contributed to young people's learning about equality in this setting, it also identified the negotiated nature of youth work.

Conclusions were drawn about how young people negotiated their relationships with youth workers and 'other' young people. Analysis also concluded that being treated equally, and working across social and cultural boundaries, facilitated their learning about equality and helped young people to make micro-level changes in their lives. The study calls for further investment in generic youth work as a starting point for equality work and asserts an optimistic future for practice that has a democratic and emancipatory purpose at its heart.

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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1. *The context and purpose for this study*

Chapter Outline

This chapter introduces the context and purpose for this study by locating it within contemporary discourse and practice. First, it introduces the context and offers a definition of youth work and equality studies, in order to clarify current understandings of the ideas and terms that are at the heart of the study. Next, it outlines historical and contemporary developments and perspectives on the nature and purpose of youth work in the UK. This leads to identification of a research problem. Finally, the chapter provides an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Introducing the context for this study

Youth work appears to be in a constant state of flux where it is suggested as occupying 'an ambivalent space…appearing to be under threat…[but also]…valued and in demand, on condition that it constantly reinvents itself' (Batsleer, 2010, p. 153). Batsleer also suggests that youth work is often caught between an inclination towards a critical stance that challenges the status quo and one that is compliant with prevailing social discourse.

The point at which youth work becomes important to young people is 'at that particular moment in their lives when they are developing their awareness, seeking answers and, crucially, beginning to explore their beliefs, values and choices (Young, 2006, p. 28). Thus, concerns about young people as both the future hope for, and threat to, society, take youth work in a number of different directions that respond to a wide range of concerns.
Youth work has evolved and adapted over the last 150 years to meet various educational, social, cultural and political needs (Jeffs and Smith, 2010). This has led to youth workers being employed in areas such as education, health,

jobs access, community safety, participation and citizenship. Yet, this capacity to adapt in order to meet current demands for services that prioritise safety and economic wealth has, according to Davies (2005) left some forms of youth work vulnerable to misinterpretation.

There is vigorous debate about the purpose of youth work and it has increasingly been described as under-threat (de St Croix, 2010; Taylor, 2008; Young, 2006). Across the UK there have been calls for a detailed review of policy and practice, in order to consider the benefits and purpose of youth work and to develop a strategic vision for the future (YouthLink, 2011). At European level there are ongoing calls for research into the value of youth work. This study has developed in the midst of this debate which at times can appear one-sided and the lack of empirical work brings a risk in over-reliance on a few key authors. Yet, calls to defend and rearticulate a social and democratic purpose for youth work, are emerging (Davies, 2011; IDoYW, 2011; Taylor, 2008; 2010; Tett, 2010) and so the timing of this study is useful in contributing to this debate.

1.2 Defining youth work and equality studies

1.2.1 Youth work as informal education

As the introduction suggests, the nature and purpose of youth work is both complex and contested. Smith's definition of youth work proposed the following elements: voluntary participation, commitment to association and positive relationships with others, synthesis of friendliness, informal approach and integrity and concern for well-being and educational progression (Smith, 2002). Davies (2005) has identified the defining characteristics of youth work as including: voluntary participation; tipping the balance of power in young people's favour; responding to their expectations for fun and challenging activities; responding to their social, emotional and cultural identities and peer networks.

Yet, the findings of an exploratory study of youth workers' perceptions and experiences about youth work in Northern Ireland (Harland and Morgan, 2006) suggested that, 'there seemed to be more consensus…[about]…what youth work was *not'* (2006, p. 8). A lack of consensus could be indicative of an emerging or maturing youth work profession, as exemplified in the introduction of specialised training as recently as the 1960s. It may also suggest a need for increased research and development in order to bring the nature and purpose of youth work into focus within a wider research community.

Despite this lack of consensus, Harland and Morgan (2006) found that there was some agreement about what youth work is: an open ended alternative approach to time-limited formal education; doing with (rather than doing for); having a focus on communities (not seeing young people in a vacuum); and that young people's engagement was voluntary. Further, participants were supportive of process-based relationships, rather than product-orientated outcomes and it appeared that, 'the process of youth work was generally seen to be contingent on the quality of relationship between a young person and a youth worker' (Harland and Morgan, 2006, p. 10).

These perspectives are consistent with definitions of youth work that propose its core purpose as, 'the personal and social development of young people through informal education…[with]…young people at the centre of youth work practice which is fundamentally concerned with their education and welfare' (Spence, Devanney and Noonan, 2006, p. 1).

In developing a manifesto for youth work, Davies (2005) described it as an unfinished practice that has never been sufficiently developed to reach its full potential. This manifesto, produced as a work in progress, sought to articulate a distinctive contribution for youth work among other forms of work with young people. Davies (2005) was concerned that youth work might become marginalised by changing policy and practice directions and sought to ensure that the particular potential of youth work might be more strongly presented.

Yet, it has been argued that generic activity, as distinct from targeted intervention, might be discounted as youth work altogether, to avoid confusing a broad range of leisure time pursuits with youth work as a distinct disciplinary area or specialist occupation (Banks, 2010). Alternatively, Banks (2010, p. 5) goes on to suggest that youth work as a specialist occupation involves, 'work with young people with an informal and/or developmental approach and purpose…by people who are qualified as youth workers or who consciously adopt the identity of youth worker' (Banks, 2010, p. 5).

Thus, youth work is understood to be something different from generic leisure time activity but is set within the context of young people's leisure time. It needs to be attractive enough to sustain young people's voluntary participation and is different from other practices that take an informal approach to working with people of a particular age, or identified as 'youth'. Thus, not all work with young people should be described as youth work simply because of the age of the people involved.

Central to understanding of youth work, is the premise that the primary client is always the young person (Sercombe, 2010). When the young person is the primary concern of practice, 'this places youth work in radical distinction to most other forms of engagement with young people... [where often the role]…is to balance the various interests of different stakeholders' (Sercombe, 2010, p. 26). Sercombe offers clarity and focus to the definition debate in suggesting, 'youth work is a professional relationship in which the young person is engaged as the primary client in their social context' (Sercombe, 2010, p. 27).

A generic youth work setting is therefore one where leisure time pursuits are part of the social context in which qualified, or critically conscious, youth workers engage with young people in order to develop a professional relationship for youth work practice.

Examining these ideas it appears that, despite variations in perspective, there are also similarities in defining youth work. These appear to suggest that youth

work includes: voluntary participation; a focus on relationships; use of informal education and peer-led learning methods; a social, emotional and cultural purpose in associating with others to enhance learning.

Taking these ideas together, the understanding of generic youth work that was adopted in this research project is that it is developed in an informal social setting, where there is a mix of open access activity that can be a catalyst for the development of more specialist or project based work. This could include a range of projects and programmes that combine within a generic setting to create a dynamic, flexible and informal, learning environment for youth work. Generic youth work is therefore cultural, educational, social and political, and in this kind of youth work setting the young person is always the primary client.

1.2.2 Equality studies as inter-disciplinary study of equality and inequality

The word equality has different meanings for different people. Equality has been identified as concerned with equipping people to have the capacity to deal with their own situations and to make decisions that enable them to take forward their own aims and actions (Baker, et al, 2004).

When people are connected by a shared or common identity, or when they interact with each other in a particular or systematic way, they are often identified as a social group. Members of a social group share the privilege or disadvantage that comes with belonging to the group, and in life, people often belong to a number of social groups on the basis, for example, of gender, class or race (Giddens, 2001).

In literature, the study of social groups and their experiences of inequality are often described as equality studies. Baker et al. (2004, p. 42) have suggested that in studying equality, ‘it is often useful to focus on particular…social groups because individuals usually experience inequality as a consequence of their membership of these groups’.

Equality is also understood as a relational concept applied to both individuals and groups (Wyn and Whyte, 1999). However, the level and purpose of those relationships are complex and difficult to define. For example, everyone having their basic needs met does not mean meeting these needs equally for each person.

Thus, young people's capacity to deal with their own situations is influenced by how they are positioned in relationship to the rest of society and to each other. In the UK, young people are routinely found to be 'at the bottom of the scale of power…[and]…have norms, rules and definitions of order imposed upon them' (Hamilton and Seymour, 2006, p. 63). The balance of power is often held by controlling adults who see young people as 'a threat to the social fabric of this country' (Barber, 2007, p. 79).

The idea of adult control over young people has led to their exclusion from political processes and sometimes makes it difficult for young people to assert their rights as citizens (Bessant, 2007; de St. Croix, 2010; Taylor, 2010). This makes it difficult for many young people to take forward their own aims and actions. In effect, young people may be regarded as a social group that experiences inequality because of age.

Taken together these ideas informed my understanding of equality studies as the study of social groups, and their experiences of equality and inequality, which recognises complexity in social relations. For the purposes of this study, young people may be regarded as a social group that experiences inequality on grounds of age.

Baker et al. (2004) have also argued equality studies are interdisciplinary and transformative, in the same way that women's studies and disability studies work across disciplinary boundaries to transform how the world is understood in order to promote equality. This view of equality studies as interdisciplinary, and the lack of empirical research about youth work, suggested a need to examine young people's experiences of equality in a youth work setting. To understand the youth work discipline, I needed to consider how youth work developed in the UK.

1.3 Youth work development in the United Kingdom

1.3.1 Early youth work development in voluntary and philanthropic movements (late 19th to early 20th Century)

Youth work in the UK has its roots in philanthropic movements of the 19th Century (Tett, 2006; Smith, 1999, 2002; Davies, 1999a, 1999b). The idea that those who were 'better off' could help poor young people through provision of activities marked the beginning of movements such as Scouting and the Boys' Brigade. Early youth work was a charitable reaction to young people who were adversely affected by conditions of poverty and a changing society (Jeffs, 2009; Wallace, 2008). This influenced the development of various forms of youth work. For example, the founding of the YMCA in 1844 aimed to uphold Christian values. These values evolved to incorporate its current mission in working with people from all faiths to promote equal opportunity, loving and understanding relations, and the development of the whole person (YMCA, 2009).

Introducing the Scouting movement in 1908, Baden-Powell also represented concern for young people's well-being, particularly the poor physical and mental condition of young men attempting to join the army during the Boer war (See Smith, 2002). Scouting aimed to improve mental well-being and physical development through adventure, self-sufficiency and young people working together. This ethos encapsulated interest in the social lives of young people and promoted learning through doing, which remain central to youth work practice to-day.

While philanthropic youth work for young men was emerging, concerns about the exploitation of young women lead to the development of National Organisation of Girls Clubs (established in 1911 and now known as Youth UK). It was not until the 1930s that the idea of youth work was first discussed as an endeavour that involved both boys and girls (Smith, 2002).

1.3.2 The Albemarle and Kilbrandon Years (1950s to early70s)

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, youth services were developed in response to societal concerns about unruly young people and sub-cultural groupings such as Teddy Boys or Mods and Rockers. This led to a series of 'moral panics' about young people's lifestyles (Cohen, 1972). The Albemarle Report (HMSO, 1960) in England and Wales, and the Kilbrandon Report (HMSO, 1964) in Scotland marked a turning point in state provision of youth services. Unprecedented levels of investment included youth service development, the introduction of training for a skilled workforce and a comprehensive building programme to support what has been described as a 'golden age' for youth work (Davies, 1999a, 1999b; Robertson, 2005).

Taking all of these together, youth work was seen as a means of socialising young people into adulthood and facilitating their democratic participation in society. This included informal leisure spaces, youth clubs and cafés, where young people could meet and associate freely with each other, and was grounded in informal social education and concern for well-being (Davies and Gibson, 1967; Jeffs and Smith, 1999).

1.3.3 Changing perspectives in the post-Albemarle and Kilbrandon era

In the 1970s youth work responded to a view of young people as consumers and moved from seeking to address the moral panic agenda towards provision that was based on young people's increased discretionary spending power and their use of free time for leisure activity. Despite offering exciting things to do, youth work retained interest in educational and social welfare, including participation with other young people in democratic processes that, according to Young (2006, p. 15), 'introduced political education onto the youth work agenda'. The 1970s also saw the effect of funding cuts that led to a fragmentation of services between those developed in the public sector and those developed through short-term funding opportunities in the independent, voluntary sector (Robertson, 2005).

During the 1980s youth work was vulnerable to further cuts and the economic recession brought high youth unemployment, which led to a rebranding of youth work to include youth development, jobs access activity and youth participation (Strathclyde Regional Council, 1984). Reflecting on practice at that time, this meant that in addition to evening and leisure time activity, youth work became a daytime and employment related pursuit, concerned with young people's transitions from, for example, school to work or training, and from family to independent living.

For young people whose experiences of schooling were negative, or whose lives were impacted by circumstances such as being a young single parent or unemployed, this increase in daytime and informal education in youth work was welcomed as a way of building their capacity to find work and to feel positive about themselves. More formalised and daytime provision combined with a persistent view of educational purpose and calls for parity in professional status to herald the introduction of a youth work curriculum as a flexible learning framework for planning and delivery of youth work (Milburn, Clark, Forde, Fulton, Locke and MacQuarrie, 1995; Ord, 2004;2007 Robertson, 2005; Young 2006).

The 1980s also saw a decline in attendance at youth clubs as young people spent more time playing games at home, or in commercial establishments such as fast food outlets or cinemas (Hendry, Shucksmith, Love and Glendinning, 1993). There was a shift from the provision of universal services to those targeted on young people 'at risk', and in analysing youth work policy Smith (1999, 2002) suggested that funding was increasingly tied into delivery of specified outcomes for young people (Smith, 1999, 2002), where value for money could be shown, for example in progression from training to employment or in reduced drug use or offending behaviour.

This trend towards specified outcomes continued into the 1990s, when citizenship and participation programmes emerged as key elements of youth work. These were grounded in the UN Convention that asserts the rights of children and young people to be included in decision-making about matters

that affect them (United Nations, 1989). This introduced youth strategies that sought to empower young people by involving them in decision making, for example, through the creation of local youth fora and national initiatives. In Scotland, this included the Youth Enquiry Service which was established in the 1980s (Strathclyde Regional Council, 1984), and laid the foundations for more recent developments such as Young Scot and the first sitting of the Scottish Youth Parliament in1999 (Scottish Youth Parliament, 2008), with a UK Youth Parliament following in 2001 (United Kingdom Youth Parliament, 2008).

Yet, while the involvement of young people in participation networks may be individually beneficial, McCulloch (2007) has argued that their participation does not appear to facilitate significant change in how they are viewed by society or in how they are involved in democratic processes.

Further, although youth work enjoyed a position of some strength in the post-Albemarle years, over time, funding and policy developments created an 'ideological shift' (Harland, Harvey, Morgan and McCready, 2005 p. 58). This shift fragmented the sector, and youth work became aligned with a deficit view of young people (Barber, 2007; Morgan and O'Hare, 2001; Waiton, 2001). This focussed on 'deficiencies and lack of responsibility rather than their marginality or the impact of structural inequalities on their lives' (Tett, 2006, p. 49). Instead of seeing young people as assets in their communities, seeing them as deficient meant that youth workers and young people were directed by policies that generalised young people as deficient, 'needy' or regarded as problem when compared to adults.

Rather than seeking to eradicate this view, and address the marginal status of young people, or the impacts of inequality, funding became tied into targeted interventions such as crime or pregnancy prevention and programmes that enhanced employment prospects. While these interventions were needed they did not always bring additional funding and so funding for generic youth work, which sought to address a breadth of young people's social, emotional, education and welfare interests, became more difficult to find.

There is consensus, that these shifts in policy direction in youth work literature, and new developments in daytime and targeted youth work, which were designed to reach the most vulnerable and excluded young people, had a negative impact on the development of generic youth work as a universal service for all.

Yet, by focussing on problems associated with economic and individual exclusion, Milburn, et al. (1995) have suggested that the breadth of the youth work curriculum may have been constrained by focussing on delivery of products, rather than development of process.

For example, as noted earlier, youth clubs emerged in the 1800s to include single gender work, faith based groups, activity and outdoor education groups. These clubs offered spaces where young people could meet up with friends, participate with others and have fun (Smith, 2002). These spaces were described as the starting point in a process of informal education (Jeffs and Smith, 2010). One of its earliest and most ardent supporters described the youth club as:

> The club at its best creates a society of personalities with a community sense, which is the essence of good citizenship...We are not concerned with the making of 'good club members' or 'well-organized youth groups', but with a much wider issue, the making of good citizens. This can only be done in a society where each member is important, where each one is given a chance to contribute something to the life of the group - the leader no more and no less than the member. It is for this reason that self-government is so important in club work.
>
> McAlister-Brew (1943, p.12)

Although written in the 1940s this was an important reminder in the 1980s about the purpose of youth work, and remains relevant to current thinking on citizenship and youth voice. It could have been written in more recent times.

As such, youth clubs have remained at the heart of youth work services, although the look and feel of contemporary youth clubs are usually developed around an internet café or pub-style design.

1.3.4 Current developments in youth work

Neo-liberal developments in public policy and management of services have regulated practice through for example, the introduction of market driven, business practices and a focus on individual performance. In youth work this has included a function-by-function set of competences and the creation of occupational standards for youth work (LLUK, 2008). These include basic competencies such as, being able to 'communicate effectively and develop rapport with young people' or 'identify and secure resources for youth work'. Yet, they also include some more complex elements, such as 'lead change' or 'support young people in taking action and tackling problems'.

In examining the state of youth work in current policy environments, the introduction of outcome-focussed policies may be seen in a positive light, providing direction and demonstrating value for money, or in negative light, as constraining practice, reducing flexibility and reshaping relationships between youth workers and young people (Davies and Merton, 2009).

Yet, Davies and Merton also argue that a shift from non-accredited informal learning towards accredited qualifications could also be regarded as a positive move in helping young people to find work. However, they temper this counter argument by highlighting that this shift is most productive when it flows organically, from the youth work process, rather than being introduced as a specific purpose of the programme (Davies and Merton, 2009). This emphasises the voluntary nature of engagement in youth work, as distinct from engagement that is tied to for example, payment or receipt of benefits.

Thus, as state intervention in the lives of young people has increased (Mizen, 2004) it appears that youth work has become, 'increasingly prescriptive, intrusive and insistent' (Davies and Merton, 2009, p. 46). This raises concerns

about the future development and funding of youth work, and whether kinds of youth work that put the young person at the centre of a social and democratic process will remain. Targeting outcomes and outputs that are related to behaviour change, preparation for work or diversion from prosecution, suggest a purpose for youth work that may constrain its emanicipatory purpose.

For example, Jeffs and Banks (2010) have suggested that an agenda of social control has become more explicit and dominant in youth work and that this impacts on the methods used to engage with young people and creates an increasingly controlling purposes for youth work activity. Similarly, Fyffe (2010) has warned against tokenistic forms of participation that could serve to exclude rather than engage young people in citizenship activity.

Prescribing outcomes may suggest a focus for youth work on the kind of programme delivered (what youth work does), and in its informal approach (how youth work develops) but it shifts the focus away from the important question of why youth work is developed. Yet, in generic youth work terms it appeared to me that why youth work is developed is at the heart of practice. Without its distinctive value-base in emancipatory and democratic purpose, generic youth work may be reduced to the kind of leisure time pursuit that Banks (2010) alerted us to, and which delivers to consumers, rather than developing an educational process through dialogue and association with others.

A lack of understanding of how this value-base and purpose impact on youth work is compounded by a lack of practice-based research:

> The creation of research-based, theoretically developed and practice-informed texts is necessary to the process of creating a discursive field in which the meanings, values and potential of youth work as professional activity might be effectively communicated.
>
> Spence (2007, p. 4)

In addition to questioning the meaning, values and potential for youth work, Spence et al (2006, p. 104) also suggested that equality was 'integral to youth work practice'. Arguing for a 'critical mass of intellectual dialogue' (Spence, 2007, p. 16), communicating about youth work across disciplinary borders was suggested as a means of strengthening future development of youth work.

My own interest in this research builds on previous research and an earlier career in youth work and in the development of youth work policy at local and national level in Scotland. I was involved in an evaluation of young people's participation in youth services across nine neighbourhoods in an inner city area that was recognised by government as an area of high levels of social deprivation (Coburn, Tinney and Wallace, 2003). These research findings suggested apparent inequalities in the nature and levels of participation in services between young women and young men.

This informed my decision to examine young women's participation in physical fitness activity for my Master's dissertation (Coburn, 2005). I subsequently found inequalities in participation levels that were consistent with an acceptance of a 'subordinate position through unconscious consent…[linked to]…socially prescribed gender roles' (Delamere, 2001, p. 16). My Master's dissertation raised a number of unanswered questions about young men's experiences of inequality and whether gender was the main cause of discrimination, or if age was also a factor. Both studies suggested that more research was needed to understand whether, as claimed in literature, equality was a core value base in youth work and, if this was the case, how young people in youth work might learn about equality.

Finally, having worked for 23 years in youth work, the last three of which included a strategic role as a Local Authority Youth Policy Advisor, I was responsible for developing and resourcing youth work and related services. Often these were claimed to be emancipatory programmes that sought to challenge discrimination and oppression. Yet, by focussing on more tangible and measurable outputs or outcomes there was nothing in place to show systematic gathering of evidence in order to verify whether practice was

emanicpatory or liberating. Therefore, I wondered what a systematic study of youth work might reveal.

This section has shown that, in both historical and contemporary contexts, young people's welfare and educational development have been positioned at the heart of youth work in the UK. However, influences on the development of youth work have come from outside of the UK and from different disciplinary areas. I examined these influences in roughly chronological order to show how they have evolved throughout the 20th Century.

Yet, in the six years since I began this research, in late 2006, youth work discourse has changed from optimism for the future to pessimism in predicting the potential demise of generic and emancipatory forms of youth work (Davies and Merton, 2009; Jeffs and Spence, 2008; Young, 2006). These predictions were concerning when combined with Davies (2005) description of youth work as an unfinished practice that needed to be developed. If true, these predictions could herald the downfall of an important but misunderstood practice.

1.3.5 *Identifying the research problem*

Against this changing back-drop, anecdotal evidence from practice suggested that an emancipatory value base and social and democratic purpose were flourishing in some generic youth work settings. Yet, a lack of practice-based research (Spence, 2007) meant there was no research evidence to demonstrate whether an egalitarian value base did underpin generic youth work.

Studies of young people's experiences of equality and power relations have tended to focus on inequality, for example, race or gender (Catan, 2004; Hallgren, 2005; McRobbie, 2000; Rich, 2003). Other studies have examined young people's relationships with, and use of, public space (Skelton and Valentine, 1998; Chatterton and Hollands, 2003). Yet, despite an extensive trawl of literature, I was unable to find any research about young people's experiences of equality in a generic youth work setting.

Even in those areas where participation models were examined, these appeared to show individual benefit, but were limited in their capacity to demonstrate social change in terms of how young people were engaged in their communities or regarded as equal citizens (McCulloch, 2007; Deuchar and Maitles, 2008). This again suggested a need to examine whether social change might be made possible through participation in youth work.

In introducing the context for this study, I have shown there is a value base for equality and democratic purpose in youth work literature (Williamson, 2008; Harland and Morgan, 2006; Scottish Executive, 2007). However, changes in the policy environment have led to increased use of informal youth work methods in a range of contexts, such as jobs access activity or health improvement. While these policy developments are needed and welcomed, the resultant shift in youth work practice has led to creation of a more outcome and output driven practice. There is a consensus in youth work literature that this policy shift appears to contradict the founding principles of youth work and its distinctive social and democratic purpose (Davies, 2005; Jeffs and Smith, 2010; Wallace, 2008). Concern about shifting policies in this way was part of the rationale for a study that sought to examine young people's experiences and perceptions of equality in a generic youth work setting.

1.4 Outline of thesis

This section outlines how the thesis is presented in four parts. Part one introduces the study and reviews literature. Part two discusses research design and reports on lessons learned from a pilot study. Part three presents my initial interpretation of findings from the data. Part four contextualises the findings in literature and draws conclusions that may inform policy and practice development in youth work.

Part One: Introduction to the study

This chapter provides definitions of youth work and equality studies and an overview of youth work development to contextualise the study. The chapter tracks youth work development in light of changing perspectives about young people to outline ongoing debates about the nature and purpose of youth work. These have been developing since the late 1800s until a recent shift towards accreditation was suggested, by some, as a misunderstanding of the purpose of youth work (Davies, 2005; Jeffs and Smith, 2002). A lack of empirical research makes it difficult to counter such concerns (Spence, 2007). Spence, Devanney and Noonan (2006) found that youth workers saw equality as part of the value base for youth work. The lack of empirical evidence to support this claim was provided the rationale for this research.

Chapter two reviews literature in three areas: young people, youth work and equality. The literature suggests that young people are regarded by society as deviant and that they are often marginalised (Morgan and O'Hare, 2001; Mizen, 2004; Wyn and White, 1997). Problems of inequality have been addressed through specialist funding (Spence, et al., 2006), targeted on social groups, such as young Muslim women (Cressey, 2008) or young black men (Palmer and Pitts, 2006). The review suggests that further research is needed to increase understanding of how young people learn about equality in generic youth work and identified three research questions.

Part Two: Research design

Chapter three outlines the research design for this ethnographic case study. It discusses research design in two sections. First, it identifies the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpinned the research and discusses how I decided on ethnographic case study as the research methodology. Second, it introduces the pilot study and discusses the lessons learned. This included examination and testing of methods that were used to gather and analyse data in the pilot and to show how these informed the main study.

Chapter four focuses on those research design elements and processes that were specific to the main study. First, it introduces the main study and outlines the coding process that developed as the study unfolded. Second, ethical matters are discussed to show the steps that were taken to prevent risk to participants. Third, information on participants and how they were selected clarifies my sampling strategy and provides details on each of the young people involved in the main study. Finally, the theoretical framework for analysis is explained.

Part Three: Findings

Chapter five examines young people's reasons for engaging in youth work. It responds to Research Question 1: Why do young people attend this youth work setting? (Objective a). The chapter identifies what young people did when they engaged in youth work and provides information on why they attended. The chapter suggests their reasons for participation were multi-dimensional and identifies social, emotional and cultural reasons for engaging in youth work which was found to enhance their sense of well-being.

Chapter six provides analysis of findings to explain two aspects of the youth work setting: making sense of their experiences; engaging in volunteering. The chapter suggests how these aspects appeared to contribute to the creation of a value-base that underpinned young people's experiences and perceptions of equality in the setting. Its main purpose is to suggest how this value-base provided the context for examination of young people's experiences and for their learning about equality.

Chapter seven responds to the Research Question 2: Do young people perceive and experience equality in this youth work setting? It reports on the young people's perspectives on the meaning of equality and their views about their experiences of equality in youth work. The chapter shows that youth work engaged the young people in learning experiences that showed the five dimensions of equality proposed by Baker et al. (2004) in the case setting.

Chapter eight examines young people's learning about equality in youth work, responding to the Research Question 3: Does youth work, as practised in this setting, help young people to learn about equality? First, the chapter shows how young people learned through conversational, dialogical and cross-cultural interactions. The chapter suggests that youth work engaged these young people in experiential learning that appeared to transform their thinking and helped them to learn about equality through changing relationships with each other and with youth workers in this setting.

Part Four: Contextualising Analysis in Literature

Chapter nine contextualises the findings in the literature. It argues that youth work is a boundary crossing, voluntary endeavour, built on a critical discourse and a youth work curriculum that is valued by young people. It was clear from what the young people said about their experiences of equality and of learning, that generic youth work may be interpreted as an emancipatory practice, and that their learning about equality could contribute to knowledge that showed a link between youth work and equality work. The chapter makes the case for five stages of negotiation that were found in this youth work setting: conflict; challenge; change; consciousness; co-operation.

Finally, chapter ten reflects on the research process and the lessons I learned from undertaking this study. It draws on earlier analysis to develop conclusions about young people's reasons for attending youth work, their experiences of, and learning about, equality and the idea of a negotiation principle in youth work. The chapter discusses the implications for youth work policy and practice and suggests future research questions that have arisen from this study.

2 Literature Review

Chapter Outline

This chapter reviews literature on young people, youth work and equality in order to make the case for this study. First, I explain how the literature review was conducted in order to identify the core research interests. Then, the literature about young people was examined. This suggested that young people were regarded by society as deviant and were marginalised (Morgan and O'Hare, 2001; Mizen, 2004; Wyn and White, 1997). Next, an overview of policy and practice about youth work, young people and equality is provided. The literature suggested that problems of inequality were found to be addressed in youth work through specialist funding (Spence, et al., 2006), targeted on social groups, such as young Muslim women (Cressey, 2008) or young black men (Palmer and Pitts, 2006). The literature also showed a range of responses to current discourse. This review concludes that further research was needed to increase understanding of the importance of equality in youth work and to consider how young people learn about equality in a generic youth work setting. In doing this, the review identifies the study aims and objectives.

2.1 Using the literature review to examine core research interests

2.1.1 The literature review process

A literature review clarifies theoretical perspectives on issues of relevance (Robson, 2002) and includes writing about concepts to learn about them and to help build argument (Murray, 2006) and so establish why a study is needed (Mertens, 2005).

Punch (2009) suggests two ways of screening the literature. The first, concentrates on literature that is relevant to content in terms of the study topic. The second is focused on methodological literature to help increase confidence in the findings produced. I used content literature to offer a

rationale for research about equality in youth work and later, in discussion of findings, to strengthen argument. I also reviewed methodological literature in chapter three, to inform my decisions on design and development of the study.

The literature review was an ongoing process that included regular searches of library and on-line resources. I accessed literature via academic data-bases and related web-sites at local, national and international levels. My search strategy involved initial key word searches. A youth work search produced very few responses, less than 500 publications over a ten-year period, while the equality field ran into many thousands. I developed a more productive search strategy using keywords 'youth work' and 'equality' and 'young people' to narrow the focus of my search in terms of equality but to extend the focus beyond youth work. I also examined bibliographies and noted recurring authors.

In policy development and research in the United Kingdom, I found websites such as Informal Education (Infed) and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, useful. I also visited the European, UK and Scottish Parliament websites regularly to stay in touch with policy development and government think tanks about young people, youth work and equality. I also used more informal web spaces, such as YouthLink, the national youth work agency in Scotland, the UK 'In defence of Youth Work Campaign', the Netherlands Youth Insititute' and 'Truthout', in the US, all of which helped to direct my search.

Preliminary examination of literature included sociological, psychological and political sources that I used in teaching and learning about youth work within a BA Degree in Community Education. A more critical search identified changing policy and social contexts for young people and guided me towards youth and equality studies. Through ongoing review, I examined policy, practice and theoretical perspectives from Scotland, the rest of the UK and further afield. This helped me to identify gaps in literature that suggested a need for research into how young people experienced equality in youth work.

2.1.2 Identification of core research interests

In chapter one I introduced a social and democratic purpose for youth work that is believed to be underpinned by a value base of equality. This led me to identify my two core research interests:

- young people's perceptions and experiences of equality in youth work and whether this provided evidence of its underpinning value base

- young people's views about how they appeared to learn about equality by engaging in one youth work setting.

Identifying these two core interests guided this literature review towards examination of contemporary views about young people, offering an overview of policies on young people, youth work and equality

2.2 Contemporary views about young people as the starting point for this research

2.2.1 The issue of age and its links to power in youth work and youth studies literature

In introducing this thesis, I identified a view that assumed adult power over young people. This view has been described as adultism and has been questioned amid calls for a fairer distribution of power (Bell, 1995; Epstein, 2007). Recent developments in the UK, such as the 'In Defence of Youth Work' campaign (Davies, 2011; Taylor, 2010) also questioned assumptions of adult power over young people. In seeking to understand where this view has come from, this section explores contemporary views about power from youth work and youth studies literature.

Age

Differentiation of people by age seems to be a relatively new phenomenon. According to Smith (1988) this differentiation was developed in some industrial societies to categorise people for institutional and policy purposes. Mizen (2004) cites Parsons (1942) and Eisenstadt (1956) to suggest that since the middle of the 20th Century age categorisations have been used increasingly to determine entitlements to education or welfare benefits. Mizen (2004) proposes that using age as a means of organising society is not in itself problematic but suggests that the assumption of adult power over children and young people is concerning. To understand this concern, I needed to examine more closely how this assumption has prevailed.

In Western societies, the concept of adolescence was constructed in the early 1900s by G. Stanley Hall (Hall, 2006) and became synonymous with thinking about a period of growth from childhood to adulthood, often viewed as troublesome (Jeffs and Smith, 2005; 2010). This thinking informed early youth work development by responding to young people's apparent need to negotiate a difficult period in their lives. This assumes that young people need to engage in a series of personal and staged challenges, in the shift from childhood to adulthood. These challenges are suggested as a staged developmental process that young people go through to achieve physical and physiological changes, in for example puberty, becoming independent from parents/carers and developing their own set of values and beliefs (Green, 2010).

Young (2006) suggests that focussing on a specific age range the concept of adolescence is important in youth work. Yet, adolescence is not a universal phenomenon and young people's experiences vary between generations (Green, 2010). The concept is therefore fragile and disputed. Epstein (2007) suggests that many of the problems young people face are a result of the adolescent construct, rather than a phenomenon that is explained by a theory of adolescence (Epstein, 2007). So, despite its dominance in literature for over 100 years, the place of adolescence in informing the nature and purpose of youth work may be questioned in some fields or within particular discourses.

This appeared to be the case in youth work discourse where it has been suggested that those who are seriously interested in young people do not use the term adolescence because it is taken as 'a signal that the young people being referred to are …objectified, categorised and judged' (Wyn and White, 1997, p. 56). The concept has created an over-emphasis on biological development as underpinning the process of growing up. The term adolescence has been suggested as 'a period of physical, sexual and emotional development occurring between the ages of about 12 and 18' (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007, p. 55) and as such, also covers a limited time-span.

The term adolescence has also been described as 'worse than useless, designed…to detect normality and deviance, health and illness' when suggested as a fixed and homogeneous process (Batsleer, 2008, p. 51). Further, the prevalence of this concept contributes to explanation of a deficient view of young people. This view is exemplified in persistent differences in how young people are treated, compared to adults.

Jeffs and Smith (1999) provided an interesting example that illusrates how age-specific language differentiates people and expresses the power of adults over young people. They used the example of truancy (unauthorised absence from school) to illustrate this differential. Truancy is regarded as serious problem among young people, often leading to formal sanction or punishment in school or local authority contexts. Yet, they highlight that truancy is not confined to young people. For example, by using the language of absenteeism (unauthorised absence from work) this could be regarded as an adult problem too. They suggest that absenteeism is not regarded, or responded to, in the same way as truancy. They propose that using different language to describe absence such as truancy or absenteeism is indicative of a negative discourse that defines young people as a social problem but is not consistently applied to the adult population (Jeffs and Smith, 1999).

More recent theorising of youth as a period of transition (Cohen, 1987) is less reliant on age as a signifier of staged development. Transitions theory suggests that young people become adult through their engagements with institutional structures (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). For example, in the transition from

school to work or from family to independent life, gender or class are more influential than age (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005).

Transition is discussed in terms of life trajectories that suggest young people's choices about what happens to them are limited. However, it has been argued that some transitions may be more difficult than others, depending on individual or economic circumstances (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). This has led to increased involvement by youth workers in, for example, jobs access or parenting work, in order to help young people successfully navigate their transitions (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Roberts, 2011). This kind of youth work may be helpful in mitigating structural influences and the concept of a fixed trajectory. However, the idea of youth transitions could bring confusion.

For example, while the categorisation of young people as being in transition offers a fluid view of the period between childhood and adulthood, seeing young people as both dependent children and independent adults, has also led to confusion. It has been suggested that, 'different government departments construct youth in different ways…[meaning that]…some policy messages are therefore contradictory' (Jones and Bell, 2000, p. 1). If there is inconsistency in how young people are regarded in policy, this may impact on how practices are developed. Added to this, the introduction of new public management has fostered compliance in meeting targets related to the number of young people who achieve outputs in pre-determined outcomes (Davies and Merton, 2009; Harland and Morgan, 2006). Thus, while the concept of transition is useful it is also complex.

Mizen further argues that the political restructuring of the state, developed in the UK since the late 1970s, has compounded the problem of exclusion for young people. The use of age as a means of social division, has become integral to the neo-liberal market-driven economies that have replaced the Keynesian welfare state. In this way, young people's aspirations have become limited and 'age provides the means through which traditional sources of inequality between the young can be reproduced' (Mizen, 2004, p. 22).

Thus, the pervasiveness of age as a regulating factor in young people's lives was a recurring theme in literature. The assumption of adult power over young people suggested a need to examine how this might impact on power relations in youth work.

Power relations in youth work

Power is present in every aspect of human life. Thompson (2003) has suggested that whether people are able to take decisions, to set and attain goals, to resist the attempts of others to control or direct them, to increase their capacity to take autonomous action and to improve their life chances are all determined by relationships of power.

This resonates with youth work literature and policy that seeks to empower young people (Davies, 2005; Young, 2006) and includes a commitment to action where 'power relations shift and are transformed... [and where]…a closer analysis of power relationships and their impact on practice, is a prerequisite of the work we undertake' (Batsleer, 2008, p. 9). A discourse that suggests young people should be consulted with no explicit commitment to act, mitigates the chances of them being able to exercise their power or human rights, and may bring discrimination on grounds of age.

Research on youth activism called into question how an age-based categorisation of young people meant that they suffered, 'political, economic and social oppression' (Gordon, 2007, p. 634). Gordon noted that, 'most examinations of age as a social inequality…tended to leave out young people's voices and agency' (Gordon, 2007, p. 635) and suggested that more research on young people's own perspectives was needed to understand their experiences of inequality at a micro level.

Gordon (2007) conducted an ethnographic study with young people who sought to participate in politically organised social movements. He explored young people's views on age inequality and the extent to which this was connected to other forms of inequality, such as race or gender. The study concluded that youth activists recognised age inequality and developed their

own ways of becoming critically involved in society. Gordon suggested that this focus on youth activism meant more research was needed to examine whether young people are aware of age inequality in other, less politicised, settings.

As identified earlier, another discourse that has developed in response to ageist discrimination uses the term adultism in reference to, 'behaviours and attitudes based on the assumption that adults are better than young people, and entitled to act upon young people without their agreement' (Bell, 1995 p. 1). This concept has been applied more in the US than in the UK (Epstein, 2007; Skott-Myhre, 2007) but is emerging as a growing literature in this country. For example, Hill, Davies, Prout and Tisdall (2004) have argued that policy initiatives that target child and youth exclusion are developed by adults and pay little attention to adult-child power relations. They also argue that:

> If power is seen positively… power emerges as a variable rather than zero-sum game. This means that there need not be clear winners and losers fighting over a fixed amount of power but rather that power is diffused throughout society and is generated in such a way that the benefits and costs may be shared by many different actors. Thus what matters is not only who has power but how power operates.
>
> Hill et al. (2004, p. 89)

This suggests that taking a positive view of power, calls in youth work literature for power balances to be tipped towards young people (Davies, 2005) or for a fairer distribution of power (Taylor, 2008), may be achieved through a power-sharing view of power. In this sense, a more fluid operation than a hierarchical view of power could be offered, shifting from adult to young person and back again and among different social actors.

Similarly, in writing about the dialogical nature of youth work, Batsleer (2008) has suggested that 'power gained through conversation is not a matter of giving or taking, but rather a matter of give-and-take…[when]…there *are* moments of concession when existing power relationships shift' (Batsleer,

2008, p.10). In principle, this appears to offer a fairer distribution of power than taking a negative, and sometimes tokenistic, approach.

The idea of power sharing relationships implies that, in this fairer sense, ‘power as a positive concept is about having the ability or capacity to act’ (O’Brien and Moules, 2007, p. 397) and emancipatory youth work would already be based on power sharing relationships. If this was the case, then young people and youth workers would take action together, and with each other, rather than acting on behalf of each other.

This principle of power sharing is different from a type of youth work where it is assumed that adults relate to young people in a particular way, variously classified as participants, members or users of services, and where practice has been suggested as a powerful form of regulation and control (Powney, Furlong, Carmel and Hall, 1997; Jeffs and Smith, 2010, de St Croix, 2010). In this type of youth work power is used by adult youth workers to regulate or control the actions of young people who are regarded as being in a subordinate position. This assumption cautions that even when relationships are built on friendly and trusting approaches, youth workers should be conscious of the power dynamic within the setting. The importance of an underpinning and emancipatory value base thus becomes paramount to the development of youth work practice rather than risk reducing it to an informal ‘approach’ to working with young people.

The concept of power and power-sharing is also linked to ideas about empowerment, which are explained as the ‘capacity to make effective choices…and then transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes’ (Alsop et al., 2006, p. 10). They also suggest that the capacity for decision making and action relies on both agency and opportunity, where agency is linked to the ability to make choices, and opportunity is tied to the structural contexts in which the social actor, or social group, lives.

This suggests that equality is not limited by the individual capacities of young people as social actors to assert their human rights within a youth work setting.

Equality may also be about the impact of legislation as a means of promoting equality in those social contexts that are subject to legislation.

Thus, part of the rationale for this research, was to consider whether youth work appeared to offer empowering relationships that could contribute to young people's learning about equality and so inform policy and practice development.

2.2.2 Issues of gender, social class and identity

Gender

The concept of a new kind of 'future girl' (Harris, 2004) was used to account for new roles and responsibilities that were taken on by young women as society moved towards what Beck (1992) has called the risk society. Beck saw increasing risk as a consequence of globalisation, where a shift from the political and economic structures of the industrial age, which were largely concerned with class struggle, to the ecological risks associated with rapid technological and scientific advances. According to Beck, these advances bring uncertainty and a new set of risks for people to manage. In turn, the feelings of uncertainty that come from having to manage a range of new risks adds even more uncertainty which heightens people's anxiousness about risk.

In particular, he suggested that while the basis of class struggle during the industrial age was well established in issues of poverty and inequality, the nature of risks in modern society are untested and unclear. The lack of clarity and the pace of change, for Beck, highlights the importance of individual judgements in constructing a future. For example, he argued that people need to take risks into account when judging whether or not to engage in a particular course of action. This is interesting in consideration of theoretical perspectives that see young people as being in transition, from childhood to adulthood because it contributes to the individualisation of this process by emphasising the importance of the individual in determining their own futures.

The ‘future girl’ concept was constructed by Harris, as a response to the increasing levels of risk facing young women in their transitions towards adulthood. The ‘future girl’ concept was built around new social economies and increased opportunities for young women to be empowered to take responsibility for their own lives.

Harris (2004) explored why young women had become the focus of attention as successful, articulate and powerful ‘can-do’ girls or alternatively as failing, delinquent and self-harming ‘at risk’ girls. In specific relation to their use of leisure time, Harris examined how the public spaces, where young women ‘hang out’ have changed in recent times and how their increased discretionary spending power has contributed to their move from traditional leisure sites at home into public (yet privately owned) shopping malls. Although Harris’s study was not about youth work, it was interesting to note her argument that young women have become consumers of negotiated leisure spaces where their behaviour is regulated by surveillance (and often their own self-policing) but where girl-power brings confidence and highly valued citizenship that sets them apart from previous generations of young women.

Blackmore (2001) argues that ‘consumer capitalism and the media depictions of feminism have.. cultivated for many girls a sense that they have made it’ (Blackmore, 2001 in Harris, 2004, p. 21). Yet despite this, in identifying some young women as being ‘at risk’, Harris suggests that this problematises and individualises their concerns and constructs them as failures. This may result in ‘at-risk’ girls comparing themselves to others and revising their perceptions and aspirations on the basis of how well they think they measure up to other young women.

In youth work literature, this construction of ‘at-risk’ girls was interesting in light of the argument proposed by Hanbury, Lee and Batsleer (2010) which suggests that, despite a surge of ‘girl power’, youth work spaces continue to include pool tables and sports halls that are dominated by young men, while young women occupy peripheral areas, around the pool table or games hall, watching the young men.

Yet, Batsleer (2008) suggests that feminist perspectives have influenced the development of youth work, since the early days of women's stuggle for equality. For example, the suffragette, Sylvia Pankhurst, ran a girls' drama group, and over time a range of youth work practices have campaigned for women's rights and against 'sexually demeaning' pin-ups (pp. 85-86). In discussing gender-specific practice, Batsleer also calls for the creation of safe spaces where conversations about gender, for both young women and young men, can help to make differences and historical perspectives visible, in order to help young people to examine their identities and capacities for agency.

Taken together these differing perspectives suggested that a study about young people's experiences of equality might help to clarify whether 'girl power' and feminism seemed influential in a generic setting or if young women continued to self-regulate their behaviour as peripheral to pool-playing boys.

Social class

The 1970s the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), at the University of Birmingham, was internationally renowned as a key source of theorising youth culture. Throughout the 60s and 70s the CCCS attempted to explain the persistence of spectacular sub-cultural groups, such as Teds, Mods and Skinheads. These spectacular groups were regarded as forms of symbolic resistance by working class males to the dominant culture of the middle classes (Cohen, 1972; Hall and Jefferson, 1976). However, over-reliance on the influence of class to explain the formation of sub-culture has been challenged in more recent discourse that suggests identities are formed through multiple and interlocking aspects of life. This more recent discourse refers to the influence, not only of single aspects, such as ability, age, class, gender and race, but also to overlapping influences of power and privilege, of social capacity and of culture.

Sub-cultural theory emphasised connections between sub-culture and social class (Hall and Jefferson, 1976) and was used to explain the emergence of skinheads and punks within a social discourse where, 'manifestations of youth

culture over the last 50 years have almost always been perceived as deviant' (Morgan and O'Hare, 2001, p. 52). While the concept of deviance is not exclusively negative (O'Donnell, 1997), research has suggested that a negative discourse has been perpetuated by social policies that damage public perceptions of young people (Black, 2001; Mizen, 2004; Shildrick, 2000).

McCulloch, Stewart and Lovegreen (2006) suggest that, despite shifts in thinking, social class remains a real part of young people's lives. They argue that, in targeting the most excluded and marginalised groups or individuals, youth workers should take an interest in how social class informs our understanding of young people and, in particular, how it contributes to the formation of their identities.

Identity

The concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) has been used to describe the overlapping structural and social inequalities that combine to shape the identities and experiences of, for example, young black women, whose lives are 'based on multiple forms of oppression' (Mehrotra, 2010, p. 420). Thus, rather than confined to a single element, such as class, gender or race, it has been argued that young people's identities are influenced by a number of interlocking elements, which suggest that the CCCS explanations were limited in their over-emphasis on the influence of class (Bennet, 1999; Skelton and Valentine, 1998).

McCulloch et al.(2006) have suggested a need to return to ideas of social class when thinking about how individual and collective groups of young people express their identities. Their research showed that social groups described as middle-class Goths and Skaters were in stable family relationships and in school or studying in further or higher education. By contrast, social groups described as lower social class Chavs and Neds, were in less stable relationships and unemployed. Their research identified that each group had its own locality based frames of reference and experience. In turn, this suggested a form of youth work that would engage with the lower class groupings, in

order to widen the choices available to them and extend their frames of reference and experience:

> A conception of 'youth work' that is concerned to support young people to become critical actors in the social, economic and political domains…[that]… must enable a shift from their being objects of policy and consumers of branded clothing.
>
> McCulloch et al. (2006, p. 554)

Thus, while CCCS explanations have been contested, the emphasis on class remains important to current youth work policy and practice which routinely targets deprived areas and excluded groups (Chaskin, 2009).

2.2.3 Discourses of youth

Examining discourses in equality and identity formation, Devlin (2006) draws on the work of Foucault and Hall to suggest that in talking about discourse, 'we are referring not just to prevalent *ideas* about young people but to practices and institutions associated with, and in themselves reproducing, those ideas' (2006, p. 13). This suggested that it was important to consider key discourses about young people that were found in youth work and youth studies literature.

The social construction of youth as a distinctive sub-culture is not a recent phenomenon. In 17th and 18th Century London young apprentices were banned from playing music, taking part in football and 'drinking in taverns'; the Scuttlers in 19th century Manchester and Salford had their own style of dress including bell bottoms, a white shirt and big leather belt with buckle and iron shod clogs; and in 1920s Germany, there were groups of young people known as 'Wilden Cliquen' (Bennet and Kahn Harris, 2004).

The Chicago School of Sociology was prominent in researching the development of sub-cultures where, 'material deprivation, physical decay and

tough cultural environment of the inner city influenced children in such areas towards delinquency' (O'Donnell, 1997, p. 350). The Chicago School raised concerns about poverty, yet also constructed a pathologising and generalising discourse of young people as delinquent and in need of reform.

However, Wyn and White (1997) argued that young people are not a homogenous group and drew attention to the ways that marginalisation was often accompanied by criminalisation as a form of social control. This was interesting in light of research that captured young people's future aspirations and discovered that their hopes did not reflect a deviant tendency but instead sought routine futures (Stokes and Tyler, 2001; Finlay, Sheridan, McKay and Nudzor, 2010). This research suggested that securing a steady job, a safe place to live and strong interpersonal relationships featured as young people's main aspirations for the future.

Yet, current literature suggests that the apparent increase in state control and intervention in their lives means that excluded young people are often, 'unable to be subjects in their own lives and become instead the objects of policy interventions' (Batsleer, 2008, p. 32). Thus, youth work appears to operate both within, and against, discourses that seek to encourage young people's participation.

For example, discourse about human and citizenship rights for young people is dependent on how they are seen or constructed by the rest of society. This presents a dilemma for youth workers who, while responding to human rights and more radical youth work discourse, realise that this discourse is limited by the extent to which young people are constructed as outside of adult society and subject to adult power and control (Jeffs and Banks, 2010).

In response to what Shaw and McCulloch suggested as 'an unhealthy tendency towards psychologistic (increasingly genetic) explanations for…individual behaviour…[which]…ignore the obvious truth that individual experience is always embedded in social structure'(2009, p. 5), they undertook a critical examination of concepts of citizenship and power. They argue that by focussing on individual, rather than collective power, unequal social

relationships are ‘rendered invisible’ which in turn limits possibilities for social change. This is particularly relevant to the purpose of youth work in a society where young people are sometimes regarded as a problem, either in terms of deviance and resistance to the dominant culture, or in working through transitions that are perceived to be troublesome.

Taken together these ideas added to the case for examining how discourses and associated practices in youth work might facilitate learning about equality in youth work.

2.3 *An overview of policies about young people, youth work and equality*

2.3.1 Policies about young people

At European level a White Paper entitled A New Impetus for Youth (European Commission, 2001) gathered data from all member states to suggest a positive construction of young people:

> The strongest message given by young people is their will to play an active part in the society in which they live. If they are excluded, democracy is not being allowed to function properly. They regard the view that they are disinterested or uncommitted as groundless and unjust. They feel that they are given neither the resources nor the information and training that would enable them to play a more active role.
>
> European Commission (2001, p. 24)

This evidence suggested that young people wanted to be actively involved in society, but felt more could be done to help them to become involved. The White Paper argued for a range of formal and informal methods to be developed to encourage participation and to create opportunities for young people to learn skills for effective participation.

Five years later the European Youth Forum argued that the creation of a 'culture of participation' was a missing link in achieving a more socially just Europe (European Union, 2006).Youth participation appears to have permeated youth policy development across member states in the European Union. However, in the United Kingdom a deficit model of young people has been argued as persistent in the development of youth policy and youth work policy (Davies and Merton, 2009; Shaw and McCulloch, 2009)

A range of policies seek to address young people's deficiencies as the starting point for development of services. For example, the report entitled Promoting Positive Outcomes: Working Together to Prevent Antisocial Behaviour in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2011a) is critical of earlier assumptions that enforcement should be the main thrust of policy intervention on Anti-social Behaviour (ASB). This led to a new policy and 'shared vision for how anti-social behaviour should be tackled' (2009, p.7). However, on one hand this assumes that certain behaviour that young people engage in is anti-social and needs a strategic response, but on the other hand, policy has also shifted towards the creation of opportunities that 'encourage more balanced and evidence based reporting and counter negative stereotypes and the demonization of young people in the media' (2009, p. 14). This policy has led to some targeted youth work being funded from the proceeds of crime (2009, p.24).

Similarly, the continued development of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) (Education Scotland, 2012) has brought wide-ranging changes in education policy. In relation to youth work, Bridging the Gap: Youth Work and Schools Report (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010) highlighted the need for schools to work with other learning providers, such as youth work, in order to enhance young people's life chances. Commenting on this, the Scottish Minister for Skills and Schools (Brown, 2010) acknowledged the importance of youth work in supporting young people and easing their transitions beyond school, while also contributing to their development in relation to the four capacities of CfE: to become confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors and successful learners.

Thus, in some areas of policy development in Scotland there appears to have been a shift in thinking away from a deficit model and towards more positive approaches to youth policy development. Yet, while the language is often positive, young people remain in a deficient position. For example, in CfE it appears that young people are assumed as not having assets that mean they are already confident, responsible, contributing effectively and learning well. It is assumed they are deficient in these areas and that a young person centred curriculum will address this deficiency.

Similarly, another key policy concerning young people, Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) (Scottish Government, 2011) is underpinned by an assumption that as young people progress through their transitions to adulthood, they may face short-term or more complex difficulties and that, regardless of their circumstances, they should be able to access the support and help they need to succeed.

Yet, while GIRFEC is suggested as putting the young person at the centre, it is also grounded in a Children's Charter (Scottish Executive, 2004) which pledged support from a range of professional agencies involved in protecting children who are at risk of abuse or neglect. GIRFEC is similarly focussed on those agencies. So, in addition to values and principles about promoting young people's well-being by building strengths and resilience and by keeping them safe, GIRFEC lists its values and principles as:

> legislation, standards, procedures and professional expertise... respecting confidentiality and sharing information…promoting the same values across all working relationships…bringing together each worker's expertise…co-ordinating help…building a competent workforce.
>
> Scottish Government (2011, p. 7)

Thus, while the policy is overtly about facilitating young people's well-being, some of its core values and principles appear to be about 'getting it right' for partner agencies. This could be argued as oppositional to its aspirations for

putting the child (or young person) at the centre. It also raises questions about what happens with those young people who are not known to those services or who have not been identified as in need of professional help.

Clearly these policies are intended as a means of socialising young people out of trouble and into successful futures, enabling them to access an appropriate level of support in order to achieve their full potential. However, an alternative view could be that while each of these policies offers a useful response to some young people's needs, and are particularly helpful in ensuring targeted support where it is needed most, they could also suggest a form of youth work that seeks to control young people or facilitate their socialisation into dominant discourse. This could create conformity to a particular ideology, instead of developing young people's freedom to express their views and take control of their own interests. This highlights a need for research in order to understand how such policies impact on generic youth work, or how youth work policy might be impacted by young people's views on generic youth work.

The development of youth work policy could facilitate young people's capacity to assert their human rights (United Nations, 1989). Yet, Bessant (2007) has argued that it is difficult for governments to ensure that human rights are consistently upheld in relation to young people and it appears that capacity to bring about the level of social change required to enable young people to assert their rights may also be limited. Thus, a question remains about the potential lessons from generic youth work in developing policies to build capacity in those areas.

Further, recent research has suggested that young people's relations with adults and family members have become fragmented in current western society (IPPR, 2006; UNICEF, 2007). This again suggested that it may be useful to gain insights into young people's perspectives on their relationships with adults, and in relation to this study with adult youth workers and other young people.

In Scotland over the last decade, there has been a move to an outcomes based approach to public sector accountability with the introduction of a new 'Concordat' (Scottish Governement, 2007) and *National Performance Framework* (Scottish Government, 2011b). This framework uses what is called a 'logic model' as a tool in linking activities with outcomes. Logic models have been suggested as having three main uses: policy development, tracking progress and communicating pathways to outcomes. Outcomes within logic models are time-sequenced.

The rationale behind the logic model is that if short-term outcomes are achieved this will lead to intermediate and then long-term outcomes being realised. The logic model seeks 'to show how the intervention is expected to work or make a difference…as part of an iterative approach to building the logic and evidence for claiming that the intervention made a contribution' Mayne (2012, p. 271).

However, what was planned and what actually happens may be quite different. Illogical or unexpected events can redefine needs and aspirations. This means that delivering on outcomes does not guarantee a particular output. Thus, perhaps as a specific measure or predictor of the future, the logic model is flawed. However, used to claim a contribution, among a range of other factors that contribute to bringing about change, the logic model is gaining credence among public sector agencies:

> using logical arguments to assess the extent to which an intervention was a contributory cause to observed changes…by "demonstrating contribution" rather than "proving causality"…while also recognising the limits of their influence and the unpredictability of the external environment
>
> Wimbush, Montague and Mulherin (2012, p. 312)

Thus, the logic model could be a step in the right direction, in that it offers an understanding that there is a possible link between what is done now and the longer term, future benefits of that activity. The logic model legitimises

claims that small-scale outcomes which can be demonstrated might bring a longer term benefit in future. In Scotland, this model has been used to measure and evaluate the Scottish Alcohol Strategy. According to Wimbush et al. (2012) these findings have underpinned the introduction of minimum unit pricing and have mapped future plans in order to change ‘affordability, availability, knowledge and attitudes’ (p.317). Thus, the logic model is being taken seriously at national level in relation to public health. Therefore, could also be useful in thinking about the contribution of youth work to learning about equality.

2.3.2 Policies about youth work

The Council for Europe has suggested that youth work brings added social value in transmitting values of social justice and equality, citizenship and sustainable development (European Commission, 2012; European Union, 2009). The value of youth work in relation to ideas about equality is central to current approaches across a range of professional areas that are involved in work with young people.

In Scotland, youth work comes under the auspices of Community Education and is developed in the Community Learning and Development (CLD) sector (Tett, 2010). Taken in the broadest sense, this sector embraces voluntary and statutory agencies, organisations and national policy, in order to suggest a priority for practice that is, ‘engaging with young people to facilitate their personal, social and educational development and enable them to gain a voice, influence and a place in society’ (Scottish Executive, 2004, p. 1).

Yet, while there appears to be an expansion in policies about young people or youth work services, such as those identified in 2.3.1, these tend to be about addressing deficits or perceived problems in young people’s lives and are largely developed or more accurately ‘delivered’ as part of integrated children’s services, social work and social welfare services. These kinds of youth work are different from the kind of generic youth work that is

educational, cultural and political, where the young person is the primary client and their freedom and emancipation is the core purpose.

Yet, the lack of policy and a critical mass of research evidence about generic youth work make it difficult to determine what might reasonably be expected from generic youth workers as partners in responding to policy developments. This could explain the kind of misinterpretation that Davies (2005) has suggested for example, in cross cutting policy areas. Thus, as suggested by Sercombe (2010) youth workers may experience a duality of purpose in meeting both an expected response to policy while engaging with young people's interests as the primary focus of the learning relationship. Again, the lack of research in this area is problematic and strengthens argument for more empirical work.

In the United Kingdom, the benchmark statements for qualifying programmes in youth work offer guidance on what practitioners are expected to do in those areas where a duality exists:

- contextualise the practice of youth work in society and policy;
- locate the inter-professional context and references for their professional practice question and be prepared to deconstruct taken-for-granted and common-sense professional understandings;
- recognise and compare multiple, competing perspectives and challenge the status quo and dominant ideas;
- be aware of current debates on key concepts and contested issues.

Adapted from Quality Assurance Agency (2009)
Benchmark Statements for Youth and Community Work

Yet, in translating these statements into policy and practice, until there is a body of research on youth work we cannot know whether these benchmarks are 'enacted' or whether some elements are lost or misinterpreted. For example, in Scotland there is one national youth work strategy, yet it may be interpreted in different ways:

> Our long term vision for youth work has two main elements:
>
> - all young people in Scotland able to benefit from youth work opportunities which make a real difference to their lives; and
>
> - a youth work sector equipped and empowered to achieve ongoing positive outcomes for young people now and in the future.
>
> To achieve this we need to think both short and long term.
>
> Scottish Executive (2007, p. 1)

This national strategy suggests that youth work has a major part to play in providing life-enhancing experiences for children and young people. It also illustrates how youth work can engage young people in positive outcomes. On one hand, development appears to be young person led, yet by working to deliver positive outcomes 'for' young people the language suggests a policy or adult led vision. However, this strategy is supported by a number of small scale evaluations and a biannual survey of young people in Scotland (YouthLink, 2010a). Yet, while it may be intended as emancipatory, the limited range of empirical research means that the potential of generic youth work remains unclear.

Additionally, a reduction in policies for youth work has raised questions about whether, 'the central principles which inform youth work practice are silenced by the policy discourse' (Spence et al., 2006 p. 3).

2.3.3 Policies about equality and young people

This review found no specific policies about equality relating to young people. Some policies, such as those relating to specific issues like education, employment or community regeneration may involve young people and include a section on their particular role in the particular policy area, but in terms of equality, there is no policy that directly addresses the interests or needs of young people.

The Equality Act (2010) has introduced legislation to prevent and challenge discrimination. The Act addresses discrimination relating to a range of social groups but does not identify young people as a distinct grouping. This is also the case in the first 'triennial review' carried out by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2010) which reported to the UK Parliament on the progress being made in challenging discrimination. This review suggested young people were discriminated against in areas such as employment, education and legal and physical security, yet acknowledged that because of the way that data is collected, there were gaps in information for example, in the area of ability and disability:

> We have some data about disabled people's experiences, for example, but in most cases the way the data are collected does not make a distinction between the experiences of (say) a 20-year-old who has been blind since birth, and an 80-year-old who has recently begun to use a wheelchair following an accident, when in fact these two people might have very different needs and expectations.
>
> Equality and Human Rights Commission (2010, p. 41)

Similarly, in the equalities section of the website for the Scottish Government (2011c) there is information on how young people's employment rights are impacted by their age, and how they can challenge being discriminated against by employers on the grounds of age. However, the site also notes exemptions, such as those for apprentices, who are not automatically entitled to the minimum wage because of ambiguity in what constitutes employment and training, which leaves them open to exploitation. Further, the remaining information and links for support in helping to challenge discrimination are directed towards agencies that promote equality and rights work with people who are older, such as Age Concern (Scottish Government, 2011c).

Thus, even when age is noted as a source of discrimination, it appears that young people do not receive the same benefit from legislation as others who are subjected to discrimination on similar, ageist grounds.

2.4 How youth work in the UK appears to respond to the youth discourse

To explore the research topic, and communicate what youth work does to facilitate learning about equality to people outside of the profession, I needed to examine research projects that were published in youth work literature in order to discover how these were developed.

2.4.1 Voices from practice that help to explain what youth work does

Voices of Practice

Spence et al. (2006) examined four practice themes, in a research project on youth work in the UK (see section 3.1.2). This provided empirical evidence on areas that they identified as under-developed in policy and practice discourse: aspects of practice that were informed by relationships, dialogue, time and space; narratives of managing and negotiating expectations and practices; examination of the fit between youth work values and practices and the language or implications of policies on exclusion; and the options and possibilities for accountability within face-to-face youth work.

The ‘voices of practice’ study noted forms of exclusion, suggesting that ‘inequality and discrimination relating to age are a motivating concern of youth work’ (Spence et al, 2006 p. 104). While mainstream youth work appeared to be inclusive of a diverse range of young people, Spence et al. (2006) noted that work to address issues of equality tended to be developed through specially funded projects that targeted specific social groups.

Spence (2007) later argued the need for more research to create influence beyond educational youth work discourse that could inform other approaches to working with young people.

When compared to discourses in youth studies, Batsleer (2010) has argued that the lack of empirical research about youth work is problematic in the sense that a lack of research leaves generic youth work, and those young people

involved in it, vulnerable to direction from other discourses around work with young people. This is especially problematic where a persistent policy discourse, as we have seen in the United Kingdom, takes a negative and pathologising view of young people and where, 'the trickle of stories about youth work is in inverse proportion to the flood of stories about youth' (Batsleer, 2010, p. 154). In light of this, I wondered if the integration of youth work as part of a wider political and sociological discourse may be hindered by a lack of theoretical articulation of practices.

A youth work manifesto

As one of the most prolific authors in youth work over the last fifty years, Davies has contributed to the understanding and development of practice (Davies, 1986, 1999a, 1999b, 2005, 2005b; Davies and Gibson, 1967). Davies has evaluated and critiqued policy and discourse to analyse the possibilities and potential for youth work practice:

> The evidence collected is testimony – that is, qualitative information drawn from the experiences of those directly involved as managers, practitioners or users of youth work provision…[that]…sought to extract from these personalised and localised responses some wider and deeper meanings and messages and to play these back in ways which provide those on the front line with a stimulus for further critical reflection on what is happening to youth work
>
> Davies and Merton (2009, p. 5)

Over four decades Davies' published works have drawn on analysis of literature and policy developments, combined with personal and local experiences of youth work. These were used to generate ideas that questioned and articulated the nature and purpose of youth work. In producing his Manifesto, Davies has tapped into a youth work consciousness, by drawing on evidence from many years of practice experience, that he acknowledges as anecdotal, to produce a statement on the, 'essential features…which set [youth work] apart from other practices' (Davies, 2005, p. 7).

Davies' (2005) manifesto was written at a time when there had been a downward turn in levels of participation in youth work, yet despite this, a resurgence of interest in youth work had created a, 'new youth work chic…[that]…seems to underwrite youth work's survival and even perhaps to promise to finally move it from the recreational margins of public provision' (Davies, 2005, p. 3). The manifesto sought to configure practice so that the balance of power was tipped in young people's favour, where social and emotional aspects remained as important as they did in the 1960's and were equal to interests in improving knowledge and ability (Davies, 2005, p. 7). Davies qualified this vision with a concern that the terms, on which engagement in youth work was based, were, 'increasingly being set by non-youth work agencies…[and policy makers]… who failed to understand its potential in work with young people' (Davies, 2005, p. 5).

Yet, the lack of critical mass in youth work literature makes it difficult to articulate what that potential might be and so this manifesto was an attempt to begin dialogue about how youth work might be sustained. It provided a much-needed framework around which youth workers might coalesce and in particular was built on two main arguments: first, that a caring and ethical value base in informal and liberating education did not in itself define youth work practice, but the methods and processes by which those values were translated into actions did contribute to its distinctiveness; second, that despite increasing interest in the possibilities for youth work, a lack of understanding of youth work on the part of those writing and developing new policies may create different interpretations of what youth work is or can deliver.

Davies (2005) and others (Harland and Morgan, 2006; Jeffs and Smith, 2010), have suggested that misinterpretation may ultimately set youth work up to fail. Harland and Morgan (2006) found that this policy turn diverted youth workers' attention from the development of practices, towards meeting the demands of outcome driven agencies, in order to secure funding. In one sense, this introduces the possibility of funding a type of youth work, to operate within a policy framework that actually denigrates young people by defining them as a problem. These ideas were suggested as 'deeply at odds with youth

work as a distinctive practice' (Davies, 2005, p. 23) which causes a further dilemma for youth workers.

Davies' concern was consistent with other critiques of policy development (Smith, 2002; Jeffs and Smith, 2005) that noted an erosion of fundamental youth work values and principles, in favour of formally accredited learning. While the two are not mutually exclusive, constraints on funding appeared to target resources on identified problems, such as unemployment and parenting, and away from a more generic youth work. This raised further concerns that non-youth work agencies, according to Davies (2005) were increasingly involved in defining and funding youth work.

This was exemplified in Jeffs and Smith (1999, p. 3) argument that the introduction of measures to curb the effects of anti-social behaviour bring, 'increased emphasis on control within education and training', and as a set of policies and discourses, already shown, that appear to take a view of young people as a problem. They also suggest that this controlling discourse discounts the often profound and life-changing outcomes inherent in youth work learning processes because they are not readily measurable (Jeffs and Smith, 1999).

Davies (2005) suggests the need for a more open form of practice distinguished by seven key characteristics that, when configured together, became a distinctive youth work practice. The characteristics proposed in Davies' manifesto were a commitment to:

- young people's voluntary participation;
- seeking to tip balance of power in their favour;
- responding to their expectation that youth work will offer them relaxation and fun;
- responding to their expectation that youth work will penetrate unstimulating environments and break cycles of boredom by offering new experiences and challenging activities;
- seeing and responding to them simply as young people, as untouched as possible by pre-set labels;

- working on and from their 'territory', at times defined literally but also as appropriate to include their interests, their current activities and styles and their emotional concerns;
- respecting and working through their peer networks.

Davies (2005, p. 18)

Davies proposed these elements as, 'signposts for implementing the practice – checkpoints along the way for ascertaining whether (or not) the work is on course' (Davies, 2005, p. 19). Davies proposed this manifesto as a counter to suggestions that youth work should deliver outcomes that have been set externally or in advance of meeting the young people involved. In this sense, Davies was concerned about claims for youth work to deliver outcomes that it was not able to deliver, or to accredit specific outcomes to particular youth work interventions, that may be impossible to verify. The extent to which personal transformation (now or in later life) may be accredited to a single intervention is open to debate, even when claimed by participants.

Transformative learning

Learning in youth work involves developmental processes rather than the creation of products (Ord, 2007). It is described as a process of transformation, involving the development of knowledge or understanding, rather than transmission of information or facts (Jeffs and Smith, 1999).

According to Mezirow (2009) transformative learning is sometimes epochal, when a sudden change of thinking is based on a particular and exceptional experience. However, it can also be seen as a cumulative process where, over time, a series of experiences bring changes in disposition by reasoned reflection on what is believed to be a truth. Mezirow goes on to suggest that 'Most transformative learning takes place outside of awareness…[but that]…educators assist learners to bring this process into awareness and to improve the learner's ability and inclination to engage in transformative learning' (Mezirow, 2009 p. 94).

Yet, personal transformation and behaviour change are sometimes cited as aspirations or outcomes of youth work, when required in a funding application. Further, some of the outcomes of youth work may not become evident until many years after the interaction between young people and youth workers as the impact of transformative learning acquires meaning for those involved.

Thus, while it is possible that transformative learning is an aim for youth work, it is a fallacy to claim that a single planned experience will bring about such transformation. It is also difficult to claim a single event as evidence of learning because it is a cumulative process. What young people do in youth work may represent the final piece in a metacognitive process of reflecting on and reassessing meaning or may be the first piece in a jigsaw that will not be completed until many years after the youth work encounter.

However, it is reasonable to attempt to increase understanding of young people's perspectives about how they believe that youth work contributes to their learning and their potential transformation. In a sense, combining young people's perspectives with the logic model of thinking about outcomes in the Scottish concordat could strengthen claims about the potential benefits that may be accrued from participation in youth work.

According to Mayne (2012) logical claims to contribution are strongest when they provide a mix of context information, the perspectives of beneficiaries, theoretical and research information. Thus, the logic model could be applied alongside, for example, the characteristics in Davies' manifesto to help youth workers and young people to check what is happening in practice, rather than claim or predict outcomes of practice on the basis of their own subjectivities.

To complement this process of learning as transformation, I examined literature which proposed that learning in youth work often happens experientially and in association with others (Ord, 2009; Jeffs and Smith, 2010). This draws on established work in relation to experiential education, where the context and environment for learning are central to the learning process (Dewey, 1938,1963; Freire, 1970,1976; Kolb, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978). In youth work terms, one such learning environment is the youth club.

Youth club work

Despite an increasing interest in citizenship and reduction in the volume of open and accessible youth clubs across the UK, Robertson (2005) makes a convincing argument for youth clubs. She argues that these should be developed in tandem with other community provision, as free-standing facilities or as a part of the local community based provision for adult, families and children and suggests a value in this type of community provision.

Robertson (2005) noted a lack of empirical research or writing about youth clubs and so developed what she called a reflective ethnography, in order to facilitate examination of youth club work. These reflections were based on many years of anecdotal evidence from practice and on the day-to-day business of youth work, such as running programmes, going on residential trips and creating safe and attractive spaces for young people. Routine use of reflective recordings in youth work also provided a rich source of data.

Robertson (2005) grouped data together to identify a range of benefits of youth club work and also maintained a nightly diary, which she used to record factual and routine information and to reflect on practices. In addition to what she described as informal anecdotal evidence, Robertson also examined literature on youth work and youth club work, to capture and compare a range of practices in generic youth clubs. This analysis suggests five elements of practice that were identified (bold added by me) as important to sustaining youth club work:

- The **role of adults** includes youth workers, parents, caretakers and elected council members, variously engaged in relationships with young people as role models, social architects, managers, listeners and leaders;

- The **development of good practice** includes creating a fun-filled accessible environment that young people choose to attend. Good practice includes programmed group work and a range of social education activities or issue-based programmes

that can take place in a café or specified group room, or during trips and residential work. Good practice also includes democratic participation and promotes peer education methods;

- The **development of equal opportunities** includes seeing the club as a microcosm of the real world where issues of inequality and discrimination can be challenged and where struggles related to equality might be taken forward in both targeted or integrated and holistic youth clubs.

- The **management of the youth club** includes the interface between the club, community, other agencies and funders. Management includes staff support and supervision, involving young people and being accountable for the training, organization and funding of the club;

- The **youth club in the community** includes the location of the club and the views of people in the community about young people together with young people's views about their local community. This embraces practice in urban and rural areas, working in schools and through for example, church based, holiday clubs or inter-agency work.

Adapted from Robertson (2005, pp. 47 - 122)

Robertson argued that in the UK young people's contact with adults is increasingly found to be restricted to authority figures, such as their parents, teachers and local shop keepers. She concluded that youth clubs are therefore important in creating opportunities for young people to form informal relationships with adults. She suggested that these relationships were established on a different and often more positive footing because the young people chose to attend (Robertson, 2005). This provided insights into the potential importance of generic youth club work and suggested the need for more research in this area.

2.4.2 Targeted youth work that seeks to address social inequality

Youth work shares a common purpose with other professions, such as teaching and health promotion. This common purpose is in working towards the improved education and welfare of young people. However, its focus on processes of voluntary participation, of building relationships and of learning through associating with others, suggests a different purpose to more formal school or health settings (Davies and Merton, 2009; Jeffs and Smith, 2010).

The youth work literature offered a reflective analysis of specific youth work interventions, for example, in work with young black men (Palmer and Pitts, 2006) or young Muslim women (Cressey, 2008). Despite targeting specific social groups this literature is important in developing thinking about equality. For example, Cressey (2008) raised the issue of agency among marginalised muslim women and Palmer and Pitts (2006) explored how the concept of 'othering' was a means of discriminating against young black men. However, while this literature contributed to practice development and was instrumental in creating a youth worker network that examined issues related to working with specific social groups, this literature was largely desk-based. There was a lack of empirical work or focus on generic youth work and no research on young people's experiences of equality in generic youth work.

Yet, the values of youth work were linked to equality work in two studies where it was suggested that 'social justice is the core value of youth work' (Crooks, 1992, p. 20) and a need for youth workers to commit to, 'the Freirian notion…of remedying social inequality' (Corney, 2004, p. 522). This suggested that equality and social justice were part of the value base of youth work practice.

In youth work settings, staff meetings and in local and national fora these concepts were used together and often interchangeably. However, their meanings were complex and often multi-layered, so I needed to clarify which meanings were important in a youth work context. To enable me to do that, I examined a range of theoretical perspectives that were cited in educational

youth work literature and in policy documents across a range of international and disciplinary boundaries.

Taken together, examination of policy, practice and discourse suggests that youth work is undergoing change, where contested perspectives on young people, and on the nature and purpose of youth work, have persisted as the basis of policy development. This highlighted a need for research in order to understand the nature and purpose of youth work and its links to policy and practice development.

In thinking about the contested and ever changing nature of youth work practice, contemporary literature in informal educational youth work has often suggested that practice has been influenced by Paulo Freire's work on liberating education (Batsleer, 2008; Martin 2001; Spence et al. 2006; Tett, 2010). Thus, the next section explores why this might be the case.

2.4.3 Critical pedagogy and youth work

Ideas for critical youth work resonate with a conceptualisation of education as the practice of freedom (Freire, 1970; 1996). Education is proposed as praxis which is understood as, 'action and reflection upon the world in order to change it' (Anglas Grande, 2009, p. 206). To reflect upon the world we need to understand it, to see the historical constructions of power and the dominant culture in relationship to the everyday cultural experiences of people who are subordinate to those in power (McLaren, 2009).

Freire was troubled by the constraints of a banking model of education where knowledge was routinely deposited in students through schooling or formal instruction (Freire 1970, 1996). Freire suggested that, 'the more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world' (1996, p. 54). The banking model positions the teacher as an expert and the learner as ignorant. Thus, prescriptive banking education puts the teacher in control of what is learned, in a 'ready-to-wear approach…[that]…serves to obviate thinking' (Freire,1996, p. 57).

As an alternative, Freire proposed a critical pedagogy that uses problem posing as the focal point for learning. The learner is the starting point for critical pedagogy, not the teacher or the state. By posing problems that are related to learners themselves, both in the world and in their interaction with it, learning shifts from a theoretical abstraction of reality to a reflective process. This reveals and constructs a sense of reality by bringing new challenges and by reducing feelings of alienation through, 'education as the practice of freedom – as opposed to education as the practice of domination' (Freire, 1996, p. 63).

Taking a critical and problem-posing approach means that through dialogue and reflection teachers and learners work together to create knowledge and understanding. In this way, the teacher is also a learner and the learner is also a teacher. Framing education in the here and now, focussing on problems within real world situations as the means of raising consciousness and understanding, emphasises humanisation and the capacities of people to act in fellowship and solidarity with each other. Becoming conscious, not only of the world and the way knowledge is produced, but of our own capacities to produce new knowledge, and to change the world, is a core element of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2005; Kinchiloe, 2008; McLaren, 2009).

In the US, these ideas have tended to inform debates around school education, and in seeking to address concerns about those young people for whom schooling is a problem. Giroux (2005; 2010) has argued that the conditions in which young people live are often masked by influences such as the media or arrangements for schooling and education. He goes on to question how colonial and patriarchal inheritances impact on families and young people. Giroux suggests that where these conditions seek to maintain the subordination of young people, critical pedagogy offers an alternative to current discourse.

Further, Steinberg (2011) has examined how developments in popular culture and the corporate construction of childhood have combined with technological advances to open up young people's access to the adult world:

> technology…does not determine everyday life…it interacts with a variety of social and cultural contexts and divers individual agents to

> produce interactive social process…[that]…has produced profound – but not uniform – social changes.
>
> Steinberg (2011, p. 37)

According to Steinberg and others (Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2009; Giroux, 2009; Kinchiloe, 2008) this analysis of the pedagogical power of popular culture requires a rethinking of education both inside and outside of schooling and across cultures and communities. Aronowitz (2009) has further suggested that 'schools should cut their ties to corporate interests and reconstruct the curriculum along the lines of intellectual endeavour' (p. 120)

This view of curriculum was consistent with the emancipatory curriculum proposed by Buchroth (2010) in the context of youth and community work in the UK:

> Knowledge that is generated through an emancipatory curriculum is not a "commodity", it is not decided on beforehand and separated from the learner; instead it arises out of the process of learning itself…what is learned arises from the process of questioning…and learning is negotiated in a dialogical form between the learner and the teacher…[as]…co-investigators in the learning process
>
> Buchroth (2010, p. 79)

Throughout the UK critical pedagogy has underpinned some developments in informal and generic youth work education where it is suggested as a critical practice that is achieved through dialogue. This is exemplified in the assertion that 'developing conversations…deepen understanding and help us to make sound judgements and decisions' (Doyle and Smith, 2007, p.21). Drawing on Freirian pedagogy, Beck and Purcell (2010) also propose that youth and community work practice begins when people start to question the situations and realities they live in, and to see these as problematic. They suggest dialogue as much more than conversation and see it as a deliberate act of transformation. Further, they argue that new levels of consciousness are

achieved as the relationship between those involved in the conversation is changed through dialogue and, as before, through a process of co-investigation which creates new knowledge.

This idea of critical youth work practice resonates with principles of 'social purpose education' (Martin, 2007, p. 10) which in Scotland has been aligned to democratic purpose and is characterised in the following terms:

- Participants/learners are treated as citizens and social actors;
- Curriculum reflects shared social and political interests;
- Knowledge is actively and purposefully constructed to advance collective interests;
- Pedagogy is based on dialogue rather than transmission;
- Critical understanding is linked to social action and political engagement;
- Education is always a key resource in the broader struggle for social change.

Martin (2007, p. 10)

Martin suggests a critical educational purpose for youth and community work, that is grounded in 'nurturing the democratic impulse harnessed to a social justice agenda…[as]…our distinctive...'vocation' in the sense of finding a meaning for life in the work we do (p. 11). Martin suggests a need to challenge the status quo and 'to work against the grain of the neo-liberal common sense of our times' (p.11) and in doing so resist contemporary discourses that work against democracy and social justice.

In this sense, critical educational youth work is a type of youth work where young people are offered spaces to challenge inequalities, and through dialogue, to change the status quo (Batsleer, 2008). Critical youth work seeks to develop new possibilities for social and democratic purpose (Edinburgh Papers, 2008; Wallace, 2008) as part of a community based and dissenting vocation (Martin, 2001). Yet, despite these discussions in literature, there was limited empirical research evidence to support these assertions, which suggested a need to examine how young people learned about equality in a

youth work setting, in order to discover if there was evidence of critical pedagogy or if it could be applied in youth work research.

2.5 Perspectives on equality

Conceptualisations and discourses on equality have been developed over generations of theoretical and political debate. Yet, Thompson (2003) has suggested that theorising how these ideas might be applied in social practices to promote equality is in the very early stages of development (Thompson, 2003). This section of the literature review explores three conceptualisations on equality. First, concepts of human and social rights (United Nations, 1948) are examined. Second, discourses on social justice and fairness (Rawls, 1971) are explained. Finally, this section considers the question, 'Equality of what? The equality of condition (Baker et al, 2004) is identified as a useful framework for discussion of equality in youth work.

2.5.1 Consideration of human rights and youth rights and how these are developed in youth work

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights stated that, 'all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights' (United Nations, 1948). This promotes a discourse on equality that is based on a set of rights including human, social, cultural, economic and civil rights (Englund, Quennerstedt and Wahlstom, 2009). Thompson (2003) suggests that a human rights approach to equality offers a way of addressing issues of inequality that may be useful to practitioners who are working with people to deal with their problems. Yet, while the rights and obligations of citizenship have been developed in schools and in youth work, Deuchar and Maitles (2007) have suggested that education for citizenship offers a limited hope for democracy in schools, and also that there appears to be limited success in pupil councils.

Similarly, in Australia, Bessant (2007) found that calls for increased participation in decision making in youth work were countered by overt disapproval of young people's rights to engage in political protest. In the UK

there are obvious tensions between a form of youth work that seeks to either control young people's behaviour or socialise them into society and one that seeks to engage them in active citizenship that liberates them from barriers that impact on their participation in society.

These tensions are exemplified in research findings (Podd, 2010) which examined local authority mechanisms for youth participation. Seven local authorities participated in Podd's study. Seven senior officers were interviewed and of these, four suggested specific youth services that provided opportunities of young people to participate in decision making. Across the seven areas 19 young people were interviewed about their experiences.

The findings suggested that although young people's participation was extended across many areas of public policy, the capacity for this to enhance democracy and youth empowerment was limited within the present social systems and structures. The use of traditional methods, such as youth councils or consultation events was suggested as problematic, especially when these consultations were based on pre-set agendas, such as Children's service Plans or anti-social behaviour (see Podd, 2010, p. 25). Podd concludes that there is a lack of shared understanding about what is meant by participation and empowerment. In particular, she suggests that the roots of participation in democracy and social justice, and of empowerment as the means through which young people can challenge social structures, have become lost:

> The radical objectives of 'participation' may have been replaced by a participatory policy rooted in maintaining social control over the disenfranchised, who are historically and persistently viewed as either problematic or in need…[and for young people]…the barriers and challenges thus remain largely unchanged from those of a decade ago.

Podd (2010, p. 31)

Thus, while human rights work contributes to the development of a fairer and more equal society, taking an equality of condition perspective in youth work might suggest that current configurations of power and social structure are flawed (Baker, et al, 2004). According to Podd (2010) it would appear that these do not go far enough in seeking the level of social change needed for young people to participate equally and to be respected as equal citizens. Shaw and McCulloch have also argued:

> If young people are seen or constructed in particular ways, then those ways of seeing them might have quite different consequences for the way in which citizenship is seen in relation to *them* – and to what being a citizen might mean.
>
> Shaw and McCulloch (2009, p. 7)

Shaw and McCulloch (2009) suggest current understandings of empowerment as ‘simplistic propaganda’ (p. 7) put forward by successive Governments and suggested a need to ‘think more critically about the relationship between citizenship, democracy and the political lives of young people’ (p. 8). They suggest the creation of a political culture as the route through which to challenge inequality and that ‘in the face of injustice, exploitation or inequality, it could be argued that dissenting is the only responsible thing to do’ (p. 11) and may assist those who are furthest away from power to imagine how they might participate in democracy.

This adds to what Bessant (2007) has highlighted in discussion of the UN Convention. She reminds us that Article 12 requires children under the age of 18 ‘to have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account’ (United Nations, 1989). Yet, she suggests that while the UN Convention has clarified the rights of children and young people to play a full part in society, these rights appear to be open to interpretation in the practices and institutions that deliver or develop a variety of services for young people.

For example, in consultation process where young people's opinions are sought and listened to but where adults retain power and control over the decisions taken, and what happens, in setting the agenda and in developing a response, for example to behaviour that is perceived as anti-social.

Similarly, Englund et al. (2009) have highlighted a tension between parental rights on the education of their children, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), that seeks to strengthen young people's rights in relation to their on education. They highlight that rights conferred on adults could, in some instances, contradict the rights of young people, under the UN Convention. They suggest that this raises questions of whose view would be privileged in any dispute and opens debate on the relationship between different sets of rights. Thus, a rights discourse may be useful as a means of ensuring basic entitlements and as a starting point in the journey towards equality. Yet, there remains a question of which view would be taken in situations where there were competing or conflicting interests.

Nor does the question of equality reconcile with a human rights discourse for young people if they are also subject to the effects of a powerful discourse that means they may not always be able to assert those rights. For example, full citizenship rights are routinely withheld until young people reach the age of 21 (Fulcher and Scott, 2007).

This literature makes a case for human and social rights as the basis of young people's engagement as citizens in social democratic purpose. It called for young people to be critically and politically engaged in processes that would change the structures and remove barriers to their participation. Yet, it did not address the question of how young people might develop new democratic processes that could appeal to a wider population.

Current youth participation models mirror existing committee and parliamentary structures which could suggest a missed opportunity for democratic renewal, or could be the catalyst for people of all ages, to take forward new methods and capacities for citizen engagement. In comparison, a discourse on social justice is also offered.

2.5.2 *Consideration of social justice for young people within current discourse*

Rawls (1971) proposed that a series of social contracts clarifies how social relations develop and enable society to function. This includes, for example, political contracts between governments and citizens or economic contracts between employers and employees. Rawls proposed that the success of these contracts and the social structure of society were reliant on a liberal ideology that argued for a fairer society, 'on the grounds that the desire to avoid poverty is greater than the attraction of riches' (Heywood, 2007, p. 57). Rawls claimed that this would bring social justice by creating a fairer world and proposed two principles for fairness.

Fernandez (2000) examined Rawls' two principles for justice as fairness. The first principle was related to liberty and meant that people should be able to exercise their personal rights to free thinking and to exercising moral powers. The second principle was about equality of opportunity, meaning that people of similar ability or social class, would have a fair chance of making the same life as anyone else.

These principles of justice are rooted in individuals rather than in communities or governments. Fernandez (2000) noted the introduction of what Rawls called the 'difference principle'. The difference principle proposed that the benefits of social justice should be accrued by the most disadvantaged. This theory brought implications in terms of the development of public policy, for example, in targeting the use of public resources to ensure the welfare of people living in the most disadvantaged communities.

Rawls' conceptualisation of social justice (Rawls, 1971) was interesting because ideas about social justice and fairness were identified as important, earlier in this literature review (Bell, 1995; Davies, 2005; Epstein, 2007, 2011; Martin, 2007; Taylor, 2008, 2010). Social justice was also identified as a core value of youth work practice (Corney, 2004; Crooks, 1992).

However, critics of Rawls' theory have centred on the discordant nature of using compulsory legislative structures to create fairness and freedom and in emphasising the individual rather than community or social group (Tower Sargent, 2006). Indeed, Deuchar (2009) has argued that current legislation may discriminate against young people in the development of regulatory policies and in the passing of laws that criminalise routine activity such as hanging around the streets.

Baker et al. (2004) have also critiqued Rawls' argument for fair and equal opportunity, regardless of social class, as it appears to both accept and challenge the existence of a class division, and in particular have noted that Rawls' theory of social justice 'is also notorious for its neglect of gender' (Baker et al. 2004, p. 42).

Another issue is the extent to which legal forms of justice may or may not be realised. For example, despite the drive towards a positive view of young people as evidenced in the European Impetus for Youth (European Commission, 2001), there was little evidence of any new social or political developments within the UK to create and invest in a positive view of young people, on which to legislate for change. This may mean that significant structural changes are needed if young people are to take control over some parts of their lives.

Thus, while a theory of social justice offers a useful way of framing an equality project, its focus on the individual rather than the social seemed inappropriate in light of concerns that young people and youth workers were disempowered (Taylor, 2010; Davies and Merton, 2009) and that collective social action would be needed to change this (Martin, 2007).

Social justice further requires people to assert their rights, and to maximise opportunities that are presented or available to them. This relies on individual capacities and conditions that are not universally available. For example equality of opportunity has been criticised as a 'survival of the fittest mentality…dismissed as a 'tadpole philosophy', highlighting the struggle for survival amongst tadpoles as they develop into frogs' (Heywood, 2007, p.

106). In response to these concerns, this review turns to a view of equality that sees the eradication of inequality as a collective social endeavour rather than an individual and personal effort.

2.5.3 Consideration of a social model for thinking about equality

Since Sen posed the question 'equality of what' in 1985, many perspectives on equality have developed. These have included: equality of opportunity; equality of outset; equality of outcome (Fulcher and Scott, 2007). Equality of opportunity, suggests that people should be able to have an equal chance of achieving social position through merit. This appears as a popular conception of equality in literature (Merton et al., 2004) and in youth work policy (Scottish Executive, 2007).

However, unless people's starting points are equal at the outset, simply having access to a range of opportunities does not in itself, make a difference to people who experience inequality. Unless there is equality at the outset, people who are unable through for example, inequalities in health or financial wealth may not take up the opportunities available to them. Thus, neither equality of opportunity nor equality of outset offers people a fair and equal chance of living a good life.

Equality of outcome suggests that 'everyone should enjoy the same standard of living and life chances' (Fulcher and Scott, 2007, p. 723) where rewards or resources are shared by everyone in society (regardless of social position). This does not mean that everyone is the same, or that everyone has the same set of skills and capacities, but it does mean that 'the most significant forms of human inequality are a result of unequal treatment by society, rather than unequal endowment by nature' (Heywood, 2007, p. 106). Again, this highlights the importance of social structure in shaping people's lives and suggests that, in seeking to understand young people's experiences of equality in youth work, one should seek to examine if the social structures within youth work helped shape their experiences.

Sen (1985) theorised equality as capability by building on his conceptualisation that well-being depends on the capabilities of people to achieve agency in their capacities to do things, and to achieve their own goals. Yet, more importantly, capability is about people's capacity to function well, and not to be restricted to a limited set of functions that are within their reach. Sen (1985, 1999) argued that if one person has the same capability to function as another, then they each have the 'freedom to live well…[and]…the freedom to achieve well-being' (Sen, 1985, p. 200). Initially Sen used the capability approach to consider development in poor countries but he suggested it could also be used in affluent areas (Sen, 1999)

Nussbaum (2000, 2003) has also argued that every person should have the capability to function well and to achieve a good life. She took Sen's initial ideas and instead of considering individual abilities, developed a list of human capabilities that everyone should have in order to function well.

It has been suggested by Robeyns (2003) that although the work of Sen and Nussabaum is similar, Sen's conceptualisation was developed through seeking to address issues of poverty in countries where the question of whether people have a real opportunity or can make real choices in life is impacted by being poor. While Nussbaum's conceptualisation was more focussed on the attributes or characteristics of people and how these contributed to their capability to function through developing emotional responses in order to make meaning and take action. It has also been suggested that Nussbaum's perspectives on capability 'encourages us to encounter and learn from other cultures and societies in an effort to move towards a shared account of the core human capabilities' (Clark, 2006, p. 7). Nussbaum suggests that everyone should have the freedom and capability to participate in the good life.

Together, this emerging literature on the capability approach has also underpinned recent developments in European equality policy in terms of individual and country-wide approaches to addressing inequalities. For example, in Germany the capability approach has been used by Arndt and Volkert (2006) to examine poverty and to develop a baseline list of expectations for people to have a good life and to promote social inclusion.

In the UK, the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion has also taken a capability approach to defining equality in two ways:

> An equal society protects and promotes equality of valuable capabilities – the central and important things that people are able to do and to be – so that everyone has the substantive freedom to live in ways that they value and choose (and have reason to value and choose). An equal society recognises the diverse needs, situations and goals of individuals, and seeks to expand their capabilities by removing discrimination and prejudice and tackling the economic, political, legal, social and physical conditions that constrain people's achievements and limit their substantive freedom.
>
> Burchardt and Vizzard (2007, p. 12).

This suggests that, in order to support human flourishing, a society needs to recognise difference and to remove the discrimination and prejudice that impact on people's capability to be free to live a good life. It highlights the need to tackle a range of barriers to self-determination. While Burchardt and Vizzard do not offer a definition of society, my understanding of this concept is aligned to Giddens' conceptualisation of society as, 'a system of interrelationships, which connects individuals together…[and]…are organised in structured social relationships according to a unique culture' (Giddens, 2001, p. 22).

In specific relation to equality, some groups or individuals benefit more than others from how institutions organise and regulate social life, through education, families, and the economy, or through organisations such as businesses or churches, and through social units such as communities (Fulcher and Scott, 2007). Thus, in arguing for 'a society that seeks to protect and promote equality', Burchardt and Vizzard mean a society that comprises groups and individuals within a system of interrelated relationships, that seeks to protect and promote equality of groups and individuals within that system.

Burchardt and Vizzard (2007) also argued the importance of capability to achieving equality through a focus on how people are able to stay healthy, to develop positive self-image and to participate in society. They argue that the capability approach offers a 'structure for understanding and measuring equality' (p. 7) which is attractive because it focusses on what matters to people yet, recognises a diversity of needs and goals.

Thus, equality of capability is about people having the freedom to determine their own futures. Yet, a view of capability linked only to development of skills or capacities is rejected by Buchardt and Vizard because 'the lack of a capability indicates a failure on the part of society to provide real freedom for people; it does not indicate anything deficient about the individuals themselves'(p. 8).

They suggest a capability approach as seeking to address structural or institutional processes that constrain or act as barriers to achieving real freedom. They assert that this involves addressing different needs in different ways and that both government and social action are needed to remove barriers to well-being and equality and to eradicate discrimination.

Thus, it appears that a social model, rather than a personal model, of protecting and promoting equality could be useful in thinking about how people might experience equality. Equality as capability offered such a model. However I was drawn to the equality of condition framework developed by Baker et al. (2004), because it had already been used in educational research and was therefore more suited to researching educational youth work.

2.5.4 Consideration of equality of condition as a framework for thinking about equality in youth work

Tawney (1964) was concerned that 'the nominal rights of all citizens are the same; but the difference in their practical powers is so profound and far reaching as to cause the majority of them to possess something less than full citizenship' (p. 191). He reconceptualised equality as part of his vision for

democratic socialism. This view of equality was, according to Smith (2007), based on three key areas:

- A dispersion of power so that no one is able to wield power over another person and that people might work co-operatively for the common social purpose;

- A social function that means property rights are dependent on obligations to promote happiness and social good, which offers a way of organising society for common good, as different from a capitalist society that is organised through goals that are achieved in the pursuit of gain;

- A democratic citizenship connects power and authority to public good and citizenship linked to a shared life and set of relationships that connected the personal and the political, in purpose and process. This view of socialism was about personal attitude and commitment combined with a collective effort for the common good of humanity.

Adapted from Smith (2007)

Baker et al. (2004) have theorised equality by developing Tawney's ideas. They agree that inequality is a consequence of current capitalist and patriarchal social structures and thus, to achieve equality, a mobilising ideology for radical social change is needed. They suggest egalitarianism, and in particular equality of condition, as distinct from liberal egalitarianism, as a means of mobilising and unifying a diverse range of social movements to create a more equal society.

They argue that equality of condition takes a view of basic equality, expressed in terms of human and social rights to food and shelter, as only the starting point for discussion. This is because having these basic rights alone is not a satisfactory way of ensuring a fair distribution of resources. Baker et al. (2004) also critique a liberal egalitarian perspective, and Rawls (1971) position on social justice, arguing that this is about managing inequality rather than its

eradication. They cite the emphasis on how equally resources could be competed for rather than distributed which led them to suggest that liberal egalitarianism falls short of the mark in working towards equality.

Baker et al. (2004) propose that, while the principles of liberal egalitarianism are worthwhile, they do not challenge the inherent inequalities that persist in society and more needs to be done to rebuild and reconfigure dominant social structures. This reconfiguration takes a social egalitarian perspective, underpinned by cooperation and solidarity to suggest that 'if people live in equal social circumstances, they will be more likely to identify with one another and to work together for common benefit' (Heywood, 2007, p. 106).

A more ambitious project than liberal egalitarianism, equality of condition aims to, 'eliminate major inequalities altogether or at least massively to reduce the current scale of inequality' (Baker et al., 2004, p. 33). They argue that these conditions may be achieved by distinguishing between fairness in the competition for advantage (liberal egalitarianism) and fairness in the freedom of choice that people have in life (social egalitarianism).

This distinction is grounded in their argument that fairness of opportunity, through competing with others, does not bring fairness of choice, and indeed may limit the choices of those who are unable to compete, or who do not win the competition. Equality of condition addresses these concerns by seeking to change the rules in society, so that everyone has a fair and free choice to live their lives in the way they want.

Thompson (2003) argues that everyone involved in services that involve work with people of all ages should be engaged in the challenges of developing emancipatory practice but suggest that, 'we remain a long way from an adequate theoretical understanding of the intricacies and subtleties of promoting equality (Thompson, 2003, p. 43). It is suggested that liberal egalitarianism distinguishes between private and public spheres, where personal rights are asserted by the individual. Thus, it does not respond effectively to social structures that produce inequality through domination and oppression of particular groups in society.

On the other hand, equality of condition is about fair competition, the notion that even if people have very different capacities, they have an equal chance of engaging in the activity. Baker et al. (2004) identified five dimensions of equality and contrasted how these were interpreted in three different discourses: basic equality; liberal egalitarianism; equality of condition. The following table shows their interpretation of these different dimensions across the three discourses:

Dimensions of Equality	Basic Equality	Liberal Egalitarianism	Equality of Condition
Respect and Recognition	Basic respect	Universal citizenship Toleration of difference Public/Private distinction	Universal citizenship 'Critical-interculturalism': acceptance of diversity; redefined public/private distinction; critical dialogue on cultural difference. Limits to unequal esteem
Resources	Subsistence needs	Anti-poverty function. Rawls' difference principle -Maximise prospects of the worst off	Substantial equality of resources broadly defined, aimed at satisfying needs and enabling roughly equal prospects of well-being
Love, Care and Solidarity		A private matter? Adequate care	Ample prospects for relations of love, care and solidarity
Power	Protection against inhuman or degrading treatment	Classical civil and personal rights Liberal democracy	Liberal rights *but* limited property rights and group related rights. Stronger more participatory politics. Extension of democracy to other areas of life
Working and Learning		Occupational and educational equal opportunity Decent work Basic Education	Educational and occupational options that give everyone the prospect of self-development and satisfying work

Table (i)

Basic Equality, Liberal Egalitarianism and Equality of Condition

Baker, et al. (2004, p. 43)

The table shows how each of the five dimensions identified might be treated within three discourses of basic equality, liberal egalitarianism and equality of condition. For example, working across the dimension of respect and recognition, we can see how basic equality is about basic respect, based on the idea that as human beings, we are of equal worth and importance.

Next, the liberal egalitarian perspective on respect and recognition suggests that we are equal as citizens, and are tolerant of people and groups, so long as they show basic respect for each other. This distinguishes between the public and private sphere in that social and legal regulation of public life is different from privately held beliefs and values but that no matter what we believe in private, we share a common identity as citizens.

However, liberal egalitarians suggest that, while the right of citizenship is common to all, the rights of social esteem are earned and influenced by a range of factors and so are unequal. Equality of condition goes further than simply tolerating difference because tolerance retains a position of power over others who are in a subordinate position, and where, 'the dominant view is still seen as the normal one, while the tolerated view is seen as deviant' (Baker et al., 2004, p. 34).

By accepting and celebrating difference, the possibility for multi-cultural dialogue is created and this promotes critical understanding and supports different social groups. Baker et al., (2004) have called this mutually supporting relationship between diverse groups, inter-culturalism.

Baker et al., (2004) proposed this framework as inter-disciplinary in raising concerns across the whole area of equality rather than a single area, such as race or gender. In thinking about how young people's experiences of equality in a youth work setting might be examined, a broad approach to equality was preferred to a narrow focus on the interests of specific social groups.

The framework was interesting in promoting a view of equality that was about creating conditions that empowered people to 'exercise what might be called real choices among real options' (Baker, et al., 2004, p. 34), rather than

creating opportunities to compete for power or resources. This was similar to youth work that young people choose to participate in, for example, where youth workers stand alongside them in the struggle for equality and where there is a commitment by workers to shift power balances towards young people (Davies, 2005).

This framework could be applied to understanding, for example, age based discrimination against young people in much the same way as it may be applied to other forms of discrimination. In this sense, the choices and options available to many young people appear to be determined by a social discourse which labels them as marginalised or disconnected from the rest of society.

Equality of condition offers a frame for discussion of how to improve young people's choices and options and so reverse their experiences of marginalisation and disconnection. This discussion of options for reversal of the impacts of discrimination is helpful because the literature has shown that young people's marginalisation is grounded in ageist discrimination. Thus, by experiencing a form of discrimination that is time-limited, unlike, for example race which is fixed for a person's lifetime, reconnection may be achievable for young people when they reach adulthood. However, reconnection is not guaranteed and there may be longer term impacts for young people.

For example, in youth work literature two factors appeared to suggest that young people's experience of prejudice, as a result of age-based discrimination, might have a lasting impact on their lives. First, McCulloch (2007) has argued that a period of disconnection might impact on social democracy by changing young people's views about social and cultural relationships and citizenship (McCulloch, 2007). Second, the impact of disconnection on young people's lives in the present has been suggested as criminalising everyday activity (Deuchar, 2009) and this could lead them on a different trajectory to the one they were on previously.

The equality of condition framework (Baker et al., 2004) was used to examine equality within a community literacy initiative (Mark, 2007) and a much wider evaluation (Tett, 2006a) that examined literacy and equality in Irish society

(LEIS). The community literacy initiative 'provided an opportunity to look at economic, political and cultural dimensions of equality and how the affective or emotional realm of learning impacts on learning' (Mark, 2007, p. 22).

Both the community initiative and wider evaluation used a range of practice and research methods to engage people for whom literacy was a barrier to equality. These studies were important precedents in using equality of condition to examine 'literacy…[that was]…grounded in everyday life situations of learners' (Mark, 2007, p. 20).

In summary, this review has established that the concept of equality is complex. This complexity raises questions about what form equality might take in terms of, for example, opportunities, rights or social conditions. Yet, while Spence et al. (2006) identified that there were opportunities in generic youth work for exploration of difference, Spence (2007) later identified that the youth work sector as among the most poorly resourced and under-represented professions in the fields of education, health and social work. This literature therefore makes a case for more research about how youth work responds to the complexities of equality.

Taking a view of equality that challenges liberal egalitarianism calls for radical social change as a pre-requisite for equality of condition (Baker et al, 2004; Tawney, 1964). The equality of condition framework reaches beyond basic equality and liberal egalitarianism to the heart of an alternative, and more radical, egalitarian debate.

2.6 Using the literature review to identify the research aims and objectives

This literature review establishes the importance of equality in youth work. Yet, despite establishing equality as a core value base, there was no research evidence of young people's experiences of equality in a generic youth work setting. Further, the literature did not address the question of whether young people learned about equality in generic youth work. First, this section

identifies the gaps and challenges that have been identified in this literature review and then it identifies the aims and objectives for this study.

2.6.1 Gaps in literature and challenges for youth work research

The challenge of whether equality is a core value base in youth work

The literature review has already highlighted that research on generic youth work is limited (Robertson, 2005; Spence et al., 2006). It also suggested that 'because of its emphasis on process…youth work can too easily be misunderstood as giving too little priority to product, to outcomes' (Davies, 2005, p. 16). Spence adds that, as a consequence of this perspective, 'positive youth work has been rendered inarticulate in this environment; its discourses are colonised by terms of reference derived from other professions' (Spence, 2007, p. 5).

In developing an alternative response, Skott-Mhyre (2006, p. 219) has suggested that the 'historical practice of creating "otherness" is at the heart of many of the frustrations, which take place between those we label children and youth and those we call adults'. Skott-Mhyre suggests a need to develop a more radical youth work effort, in order to create new intersecting and common purposes for young people and adults to work together. This view suggests that, only by doing this, might we all be liberated from histories that have created fragmentation in social relations.

Yet, while recognising that outcome focussed programmes can be purposeful and useful to the individual, Harland, Harvey, Morgan and McCready (2005) were also concerned that a negative and marginalising view of young people had sometimes led to youth work being increasingly defined by agencies that do not fully appreciate its distinctive and value driven practice (Harland, Harvey, Morgan and McCready, 2005).

These terms of reference might be derived within a discourse of community safety or health and as such, researched within social work, youth justice,

criminology, health or formal education. Yet, the lack of educational and generic youth work research means that a distinctly critical youth work discourse is under-represented in literature.

It has been suggested that an aim for youth work is to 'challenge inequality, in seeking emancipation through education' (Wallace, 2008, p. 745), and to change those conditions and build a better world (Smith, 2002; de St Croix, 2009). Rather than simply accommodating or managing social conditions that perpetuate a persistently negative view of young people, the challenge for youth work is in developing an alternative response, which may require a more critical or radical youth work endeavour.

The challenge of showing how learning about equality is developed in youth work

Ord (2009) has emphasised the importance of Dewey's ideas in thinking about experiential learning in youth work. According to Dewey (1938), learning is active in terms of the relationship of a learner acting in a particular environment. Dewey saw the construction of knowledge as a two-way transaction, involving the learner and the environment in which they are located, at a particular time and place. He considered schooling as unnecessarily long and restrictive. Dewey believed that children came to school to do things and yet lived in communities that offered real, guided experiences, which fostered their capacity to contribute to democratic society.

Dewey (1938) proposed learning as a two-way transaction incorporating interactions that are about trying things out, experiencing the world in order to understand it and then, by interacting with the environment, the transaction changes both the individual and the environment. Thus, by engaging in activity and interacting with the environment, Ord has argued that education becomes an act of continuity, where:

> The relationship between past, present and future experience, but in particular the ability of the 'educative' experience to inform and

> develop future experiences…[and where]…growth must be seen in the wider context of the lives of the individuals and the community and society in which they operate.
>
> Ord (2009, p. 499)

By showing the importance of young people's educative experiences as part of a continuum of learning, Ord (2009) critiques Kolb's view of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Ord suggests that Kolb's emphasis on feelings rather than thinking, and on learners engagement in 'concrete experience', has been 'exclusively misinterpreted in youth work as being synonymous with activities or doing…the providing of experiences (p. 505). Instead, Ord argues for an acceptance of Dewey's view of educative experience linked to a curriculum for youth work that places the young person, and their lived situations or real problems, at the heart of learning where 'method and subject matter are inextricably linked' (p.507).

This leads me to suggest that the young people's experiences in the youth work setting are part of a continuum of learning that is developed from a range of experiences both inside and outside of the setting. Thus, learning about equality in youth work, as in schooling, involves young people in interaction with the environment. Learning is developed by decoding specific experiences and considering what these might mean in a wider or different context. Central to this educative process of interaction and decoding are the relationships that young people formed with youth workers and other young people.

The challenge of building relationships in youth work

Young people's relationships with each other as peers and with adult youth workers were critical features of Davies' Manifesto. According to Davies (2005) it is important to recognise the strength of feeling that young people have towards their relationships with peers.

This emphasises the importance of finding time and space, away from parents and other adults, in which to develop an adult identity young people are comfortable with. He argues that, in order for youth workers to establish

lasting and purposeful relationships with young people, they needed to understand the importance of peer networks and relationships. Further, Davies notes that, rather than taking a negative view of these relationships, youth work should take a positive view, and see them as vital to development of youth work practice.

The importance of relationships was also cited in youth work literature that argued for a commitment to association (Jeffs and Smith, 2010). Creation and maintenance of positive relationships with others has also been suggested as important elements of practice (Batsleer, 2008; Davies, 2005; Smith 2002; Spence, 2007; Young, 2006).

Further, the creation of relationships built on trust has been identified as important in facilitating, 'privileged access to…[young people's]… private world' (Spence et al., 2006, p. 33) and where the young people, 'shouldn't need to have their guard up' (Sercombe, 2010, p. 161). Thus, building relationships is also important in youth work, particularly when negotiating boundaries with peers and youth workers, where there is potential for new relationships to be forged. Relationships also underpin the research process, where an open flow of information will be reliant on establishing trust and rapport between young people and researchers (Silverman, 2006).

Taken together, each of these challenges in youth work research underpinned the development of the research aims.

2.6.2 The initial purpose of the study, its aims and objectives.

Despite a succession of conceptualisations on the construction of the youth category, the concept of youth work was found to be under-researched. Youth work claimed to have equality at its core but lacked empirical evidence in support of this claim. While a discourse on human and social rights was evident in policy and practice literature, the literature called into question the effectiveness of this discourse in achieving the levels of change required, for young people to benefit from full citizenship.

Thus, while it appeared that promoting equality and addressing inequality were at the heart of this kind of critical youth work practice, this literature review suggested a need for this research study on three counts:

- The lack of empirical evidence about equality in generic youth work highlighted a gap in literature that needed to be addressed.

- An understanding of young people's relationships with each other and with youth workers could inform understanding of how youth work contributed to their learning about equality.

- Consideration of the young people's experiences of equality in one generic setting could inform understanding of the capacity for youth work to develop an emancipatory purpose.

The equality of condition framework offered a way of examining young people's experiences and perceptions of equality. This suggested possibilities for consideration of how young people learned about equality in youth work. Robertson (2005) offered insights into youth club work, and this suggested a need to focus on a single case study, in order to explore participants' experiences in greater depth, in one youth work setting.

Having identified a discourse on young people that was primarily negative, in seeing them as a problem, I decided that this was inconsistent with a view of youth work as a dissenting practice (Martin, 2001) and with research approaches that regarded young people in a more positive light (Mertens' 2005).

Thus, a positive rationale and purpose underpinned this examination of young people's experiences of equality in generic youth work which initially aimed to:

> Examine how young people involved in youth work perceive and experience equality within one generic youth work setting, and to use

their insights to increase understanding of what young people learn about equality in youth work.

Objectives:

(a) To identify why young people attend youth work;

(b) To examine young people's perspectives on, and experiences of, equality within one generic youth work setting;

(c) To explore how young people's perspectives and experiences of equality were influenced by their involvement in this setting;

(d) To identify how young people thought that equality was demonstrated within one generic youth work setting;

(e) To consider how youth work contributed to young people's learning about equality.

These objectives were met through three research questions:

RQ 1. Why do young people attend this youth work setting? (Objective a)

RQ 2. Do young people perceive and experience equality in the youth work setting? (Objectives b and d)

RQ 3. Does youth work, as practised in this setting, help young people to learn about equality? (Objectives c and e)

The following chapter discusses how I designed this study to address these aims and objectives and how a pilot study suggested that an initial set of five draft research questions be reduced to these three.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined literature on youth work policy and practice and suggested that recent developments have primarily been driven by discourses that problematise young people. Where policy developments came from outside of youth work, some authors suggested the nature and purpose of youth work might be misinterpreted (Davies, 2005; Jeffs and Smith, 2002).

The literature has suggested that young people are stereotyped and discriminated against on grounds of age (Bell, 1995, Devlin, 2006; Epstein, 2007; Taylor, 2010) and has identified literature that calls for change in how contemporary society views young people (Davies, 2005; YouthLink, 2011). This review has also suggested that equality is an underpinning value base in youth work (Corney, 2004; Crooks, 1992) but the lack of empirical work on this topic makes a case for more research about equality in youth work is needed (Spence, 2007).

A lack of empirical research left a gap in literature about youth work, which made it an under-theorised practice, and this could lead to misinterpretations. The review has also shown equality of condition as a useful framework for community based research but it had not been used in a youth work setting. Thus, the equality of condition framework appeared to be highly relevant to contemporary youth work discourse and as a frame for discussion of equality in a generic youth work setting, and could contribute to understanding of how it might be useful in considering equality in youth work. Connecting these ideas together helped me to formulate a research problem that would examine young people's perspectives and experiences of equality in youth work.

PART TWO: RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is described over two chapters. The first chapter deals with methodological questions related to research approach, and methods of data collection and analysis. It also reports on the ethical processes I applied and lessons learned from a pilot study. The second chapter discusses specific and practical elements of the main study. This includes participant information and what I did to address problems and ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

3. Research design and lessons from the pilot study

Chapter Outline

This chapter discusses research design in two sections. First, it identifies the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpinned the research and discusses how I decided on ethnographic case study as the research methodology. Second, it introduces the pilot study and discusses the lessons learned. This included examination and testing of methods that were used to gather and analyse data in the pilot and to show how these informed the main study.

3.1 A critical overview of research methodologies

This section discusses the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpinned this study and the research methodologies that were examined to help inform my decisions on research design.

3.1.1 Ontology and Epistemology

Denscombe (2010) has identified three concepts that are important to our understanding of the social world:

> Ontology: the nature of social phenomena and the beliefs that researchers hold about social reality.

> Epistemology: the way that humans create knowledge about the social world and claim knowledge about social reality.
>
> Paradigm: the practice of social research that takes a preference for one set of beliefs and identifies particular research questions as more worthwhile than others.
>
> Adapted from Denscombe (2010, pp.118-130)

Conversely, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested ontology, epistemology and methodology as key to our understanding of a particular research paradigm. In this sense, methodology is about how the research will be conducted. In effect, how will knowledge and understanding be obtained? Literature on research design suggested that all four aspects, ontology, epistemology, methodology and paradigm, were important to research design (Cresswell, 2003; Mertens, 2005).

This section discusses the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpinned this study. The research methodology is detailed in the next section.

Ontology

I considered four ontological assumptions and how they might apply to this study: realism, constructionism, constructivism and pragmatism.

Realists believe the social world exists as an entity that, like the natural world, is outside of the mind and as such, is something that can be measured and operates independently from people in the human world (Denscombe, 2010). Scott (2005) has identified that naïve realism is aligned with positivism, in suggesting the social world as full of facts and truths that exist outside of any interpretation or intervention by people in that world. Alternatively, he suggested that radical realism suggests that people see the world in whatever way they wish.

Thus, in undertaking research realists examine mechanisms and contexts, as part of what they regard as a complex social system, in order to explain the world (Robson, 2002). This study sought to examine young people's experiences and perceptions, and to consider how their views and opinions, rather than the mechanisms or contexts of their social system, helped them to make sense of, or transform, reality. Thus, realism was not considered as an appropriate view of social reality for this study.

Alternatively, constructionism and constructivism were examined as possible ontological positions for this study. Constructionist ontology is built on the belief that people interact with each other in order to construct and reconstruct new understandings of the social world. This includes a range of multiple realities that are impacted by, for example, culture or history (Denscombe, 2010). As reality is socially constructed by people interacting with each other, this ontological position calls into question assumptions about the world by taking a critical view of common sense understandings (Burr, 2003). Constructionist research seeks to understand those interactions between people and how social realities are constructed, and as such, was part of my thinking about how knowledge might be claimed in this study.

Yet, constructivists also believe in multiple social realities that are constructed by people. However, in constructivism the focus is on individuals as the main agents in constructing their own reality. Ontologically this position suggests that 'individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences' (Cresswell, 2003, p. 8). In doing so, the research focus is on participants' views about how they make sense or meaning of their own lived experiences (Schwandt, 2000) which also seemed to offer an epistemological frame for knowledge claims.

Alternatively, pragmatism is not concerned with a particular view of reality; instead, it is concerned about what works in producing results. Rather than seeing research as a search for truth, or the meaning of reality, pragmatists value research that is of some practical use, and so the focus is on what works best in a given situation, in response to a particular research problem. Thus, ontologically there is no preferred paradigm or method for research. Nor is

there a particular view of the world, only the one that is best suited to the situation. Instead, pragmatism appeared to offer the widest range of possibilities for examining a youth work setting, and this flexibility was an attractive ontological position for this context. However, incongruence between the focus on results and the youth work focus on process meant that pragmatism did not seem appropriate for this study.

Epistemology

It was important to identify the epistemological perspective because this would inform understanding of how knowledge is claimed in this study. While ontology is about the nature of the social world, epistemology is about how we come to know the social world. Thus, epistemology informs understanding of where the researcher is coming from in claiming knowledge.

Historically, research was developed following a positivist epistemology, based on natural science. This implied that all phenomena were part of the same order of things, and so required similar approaches (Blaxter et al, 1999; Cresswell, 2003). Positivist studies rely on gathering sufficient scientific evidence to test a hypothesis in terms of measurement, causality, generalisation and replication (Bryman, 2004; Robson, 2002). Knowledge is claimed on the basis of objective and scientific facts, and researchers do not contaminate data by bringing their own values or subjectivities to the analysis of findings about a social reality that is part of the natural world.

Interpretivism is offered as an alternative epistemology that sees the social world as 'constructed and interpreted by people – rather than something that exists objectively' (Denscombe, 2010, p. 121). In this sense, reality is shaped by people. It is impossible for a researcher to remain objective about their research because their presence implies that they are part of the social world, and so cannot be positioned objectively outside of it. Knowledge about the social world is therefore subjective, and is underpinned by how researchers construct their own meanings of reality.

Another epistemology is the transformative perspective, proposed by Mertens in response to calls among feminist researchers for an alternative to dominant white and patriarchal knowledge claims. Such knowledge claims are situated in historical, social and cultural contexts and the social world is understood in light of these situations. Transformative epistemology is mindful of those situated histories and in light of this, seeks to bring forward knowledge claims that empower the least powerful.

Thus, the ontological and epistemological perspectives taken in this study were informed by my understanding of commonality in contructionism and contructivism. Both define reality as socially constructed by people. However, in constructionism people are acting together to construct a social reality that is outside of themselves, while in constructivism, individuals are seeking to make sense of the social world they live in, where construction is an internal process.

The constructivist and constructionist perspectives appeared to parallel youth work in that the literature showed a focus on the individual, as someone who was learning about themselves and their identities, but who was also part of a social group, seeking to challenge stereotypical views and acting together to shape their version of reality. In this sense, ontological assumptions that were both constructionist and constructivist could usefully be applied in this study.

In light of this, I believed an interpretive epistemological perspective was most appropriate because knowledge claims would be based on my interpretations of the young people's conctructions of their internal and external realities.

Thus, I decided that knowledge claims in this study would be constructionist, contructivist and interpretive, which for ease of communication, I have called, constructo-interpretive epistemology.

3.1.2 Deciding on the research methodologies for this study

Deductive research follows traditions that take a quantitative approach, focused on gathering facts that are measured and compared with other

evidence (Punch, 2009). This means that relationships between variables can be deduced, explanations of cause and effect evidenced, and findings generalised beyond the immediate study (Bell, 1999). Procedures need to be clear enough to enable replication by other researchers in order to validate the study. Bell (1999) suggests that quantitative approaches enable hypotheses to be scrutinised through the application of standard tests on data that are drawn from a representative sample population. Thus, deductive research begins with examination of theory and how it may be tested or measured, in or against a particular setting, to make claims that explain what is happening.

By contrast, inductive research is data driven and examines themes and patterns as they emerge through analysis of the data collected (Edwards and Talbot, 1999). Inductive research tends towards a qualitative approach that Silverman (2006) suggests is useful in social settings that do not lend themselves to experiment or statistical comparison. This approach enables the researcher to describe, and begin to understand the lived experiences of participants, by drawing on information they provide to recommend how findings may contribute to knowledge or theoretical perspectives on the topic (Robson, 2002). Inductive research contributes to theorising as a result of research, rather than in advance of it and does not aim to be entirely replicable. Inductive studies state how things are, or appear to be, in a particular instance, time or place, and findings are subject to theorising and interpretation by both researcher and reader (Blaxter, et al., 2001; Robson, 2002).

I was interested in an inductive approach because it appeared to be aligned with youth work theory. Both inductive research and youth work begin with participants, putting people and their experiences first, rather than privileging existing ideas. I was also interested in the suggestion that 'a qualitative researcher 'often goes to the site…to conduct research…[is]…highly involved in actual experiences of the participants (Cressswell, 2003, p. 181). Thus, an inductive and qualitative approach appeared to be consistent with the youth work setting and so was important in this study. Yet, study requirements vary and often there is crossover or amalgamation of research paradigms:

> There is no single method and design that can act as a catch all for all studies. Rather the emphasis should be upon the selection of a variety of techniques that will enable you to explore your research questions in more detail, and provide greater weight to any generalisation that you feel able to make in your conclusions.
>
> Edwards and Talbot (1999, p. 59)

I also found the work of Norman Denzin, who was instrumental in creating paradigm shifts in thinking about research methodology, helpful in asserting the value of qualitative research as:

> …an interdisciplinary, trans-disciplinary and sometimes counter-disciplinary field…[that]…cross-cuts the humanities, the social sciences and the physical sciences. Qualitative research is many things at the same time. It is multiparadigmic in focus. Its practitioners are sensitive to the value of the multi-method approach. They are committed to the naturalistic perspective and to the interpretive understanding of human experience. At the same time, the field is inherently political and shaped by multiple ethical, and political positions.
>
> Denzin (1994, p 576)

In addition to examining research literature, my review of youth work literature examined studies that helped to explain what youth work does. Two of these in particular outlined what they described as ethnographic methods. First, the 'Voices of Practice' study (Spence et al., 2006) and to a lesser extent, but relevant for this specific study, research on Youth Clubs (Robertson, 2005) helped me to decide on the methods to use.

Voices of practice

Spence et al. (2006) examined youth work practices to help understand youth workers' and young people's perspectives through research that 'aimed to explore the 'real' nature of youth work and in particular to think differently

about evaluation and accountability in this context' (p. 10). They identified four underdeveloped themes to help structure their analysis of findings:

- Dimensions of everyday practice that do not appear to correspond directly with certain aspects of policy…focussed on…relationship, dialogue, time and space.
- Narratives of everyday practice which operate at a variety of levels but which are not accommodated fully in the abstract professional language of 'informal education' or support…focussed on…management of expectations…day to day negotiations between young people, youth workers and other adults in the practice environment.
- The question of exclusion…the language of policy and how this is interpreted in the youth work environment.
- The question of accountability…the terms and processes of accountability…and why this element of the work seems so fraught for workers…considers the place bureaucracy and evaluation in relation to the demands and principles of face-to-face practice.

Spence, et al. (2006, p. 10)

Their study was developed in two stages over 18 months. First, they wanted to check whether the above research themes were meaningful to practitioners and so conducted eight semi-structured focus groups, in five different regions of the UK, including each different country. Four of the focus groups involved a total of 27 youth workers and the other four involved a total of 26 young people. During the second stage which they called the main study, they identified 15 youth work settings that were not representative of all kinds of youth work but did cover a range of different settings, approaches and structures:

- National to local initiatives;
- Unstructured to highly structured interventions;
- Generic to issue-based approaches;
- Detached to residential locations;

- One-to-one intensive to loose group contact;
- Universally available ‘drop-in’, to highly targeted provision;
- Open-ended to outcome-led processes.

Spence, et al. (2006, p. 12)

The settings were chosen from an initial list that contacts in Higher Education and youth and community work training had identified as places where high quality youth work was developed. Thereafter the research team was guided in selection of the final sample by criteria on socio-economic circumstances, structures of equality and identity, the range of types of setting and travel considerations.

This second stage lasted approximately one year and also included UK wide participation. Yet practical issues, such as travel and research funding meant that by the second year, most settings were located in the regions closest to the researcher’s home area.

Each phase was informed by the participant’s views from the previous phase, and a report of phase one was circulated to enable young people and youth workers to comment on, or add to, the researcher’s interpretation of meaning. Spence et al. (2007, p. 14) suggested the second phase involved ‘directed data collection’ (p.14), where interviews and directed group discussions were developed using open ended questions and by asking about themes identified in phase one. This second phase involved 105 young people who gave their accounts of the nature and purpose of youth work.

To explore the nature of practices, Spence et al. (2006) took part in the everyday aspects of the various youth work settings. Although the precise number of ‘everyday’aspects are not reported, these were reported as involving researchers in drop-in sessions, residentials, detached work and summer programmes (p. 14). Daily observations were recorded in a research diary, and participation in those everyday aspects enabled the researchers to get to know the youth work setting by joining in conversations and listening to young people in order to gain insights into their views on a breadth of topics.

They used research diaries to record, 'the processes and practices of youth work including the environment created, the people present and the conversations…between youth workers and young people' (Spence et al., 2006, p. 14). A phased approach enabled seasonal variations to be captured to build the ethnography as it went along.

Although specific numbers were not given, the observations included young people and youth workers not directly involved in the study but who were part of the social fabric of the setting and provided background information about the setting. This enabled researchers to capture and interpret the experiences of youth workers and young people from inside a practice setting.

Youth clubs

Although Robertson (2005) does not explain research methodology in detail, she describes the generation of practice-based insights as a reflective ethnography. By looking back over reports and nightly diaries to reflect on the entries and incidents that were recorded, Robertson offers stories and accounts of the youth club as anecdotal evidence that she combined with existing literature to develop an understanding of what happens in youth club work.

Litman (2012) has suggested that 'Good research may use *anecdotal evidence* (examples selected to illustrate a concept), but does not rely on them to draw conclusions' (p. 3). In this sense, Robertson uses evidence from within the setting to illustrate what youth club work is about. She emphasised the need to be around the youth work setting and to join in with what is happening in order to make sense of what is happening. Making rough notes or recording critical incidents helped to formulate ideas and to develop understanding of a generic youth club setting. According to Robertson (2005), this provided a useful way of gaining insights into young people's experiences and learning about equality there. By reflecting on these insights, Robertson was able to produce a coherent and renewed case for youth club work.

Taking these studies as a starting point, meant that my study was grounded in contemporary literature and could offer additional insights on specific areas

that they had each begun to develop in relation to suggestions about equality as underpinning youth work and importance of young people's relationships with youth workers.

These studies also helped me in designing my own study. They both used ethnographic approaches and suggested the importance of spending time in the setting, getting a feel for the everyday encounters or activities, instead of just using observation and participant observation to gather data. Again this suggested that I should engage with young people in activities and in conversations, not only those that I might think would be directly associated with the research topic. This helped me to decide that the café area would be a focus in my study. They also both included hanging around as a way of getting to know their research setting and this suggested that I should examine whether ethnography could be the underpinning methodology in this study.

Ethnography

Within educational settings, ethnography has been suggested by Conteh et al., (2005) as a useful way of gaining insights that could contribute to social change. Literature on ethnographic research suggested it as, 'the methodological approach most compatible with a democratic way of life' (Hymes, 1981, p. 97). Thus, ethnography could also be compatible with a view of youth work as a social and democratic practice (Wallace, 2008; Tett, 2010).

According to Geertz (2000), 'the ethnographer "inscribes" [Geertz's quotation mark] social discourse; he writes it down. In doing, so he turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted' (Geertz, 2000, p. 19).

Ethnographers see society as constructed by the people in it, trying to make sense of the world and the contexts in which they live and the process they are engaged in (Geertz, 1973; Silverman, 2006; Whyte 1949; Walsh, 1998). Ethnography creates knowledge through connecting thin, credible description with contextualised thicker description (Geertz, 1973). Geertz argues that

production of these descriptions requires skills in reading, interpreting and attributing meaning, instead of recording facts and describing activity thinly, out of context and with no regard to intention.

In addition, Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) have identified four features of ethnographic research: emphasis on exploration of social phenomena rather than hypothesis testing; working with unstructured and open data; reduced number of cases (possibly, one single case); interpretation of human actions articulated in verbal or narrative descriptions and explanations without interest in statistical analysis (1994, p. 248). Again, this suggested an ethnographic study could be used in this study.

In seeking to understand the social processes that people engage in to make sense of their lives (Giddens, 2001), ethnography was also suggested as concerned with description and interpretation of whole cultures or groupings where 'understanding others arises from the sheer fact of coexistence in a shared world' (Clifford, 1988, p. 35). Further, Clifford (1988, p. 39) has suggested that 'ethnography is the interpretation of cultures' and later reconceptualised ethnography as 'a constructive negotiation involving at least two, and usually more, conscious and politically significant subjects' (1988, p. 41) where the interpretation can never be considered 'innocent'. Thus, ethnography is aligned with a constructo-interpretive epistemology through which the researcher purposefully constructs a conscious interpretation of the realities of a particular cultural context.

Conteh et al. (2005) also suggest that educational ethnographies need to break this tradition of describing whole cultures, in order to facilitate examination of specific situations and people, thus making it appropriate for this study. They also propose that ethnography be combined with another methodology:

> …as a *single* methodology [ethnography] was simply not sufficient to provide a full and trustworthy answer to our big question [sic] and we each choose a second methodology in addition to ethnography.
>
> Conteh et al. (2005, p. xxii)

This apparent insufficiency suggested that I should consider combining ethnography with another approach in order to build trustworthiness. This literature suggested that educational ethnographies worked well in combination with other methodologies (Conteh, et al., 2005).

In light of this I examined survey, phenomenology, action research, and case study as possible methodologies that could be combined with ethnography in this context.

Survey

According to the research literature, a survey offers a systematic approach for gathering information on participants' experiences (Bell, 1999; Robson, 2002). Survey underpinned studies involving young people across a range of research interests. Yet, this methodology is not predominant in youth work research and I sought to discover why this might be the case.

One reason might be Robson's (2002) concerns about survey because of its reliance on personal recall and reporting, that could lead to inaccuracy, unintended researcher influence and a lack of anonymity. Robson (2002) also suggested that these concerns could be minimised through use of face-to-face interviews to assist with recall and to clarify questions or encourage participation.

However, while survey was potentially appropriate in providing 'a relatively simple and straightforward approach to the study of attitudes, values and beliefs' (Robson, 2002, p 233), surveys tend to:

> Work best with standardised questions where it is possible to be confident that the questions mean the same thing to different respondents, a condition which is difficult to satisfy when the purpose is exploratory.
>
> Robson (2002, p. 234)

The nature of youth work is young person centred and exploratory. Thus, the suggestion of survey as standardisation is problematic. For example, each participant would bring different perspectives and experiences, and so questions could not be standardised beyond initial prompts.

Similarly, Denscombe (2010, p. 12) suggests that where 'the researcher knows in advance precisely which factors are important' survey is particularly useful. As shown in the literature review, the lack of empirical work about equality in youth work meant that I did not know in advance those factors that were likely to be important and while the pilot had identified three apparent paradoxes, more research was needed to consider what this might mean. Thus, I decided that survey would be less satisfactory than approaches such as phenomenology, action research or case study, which were potentially more open and flexible.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology was suggested by MacKay (2002) as a useful approach to the examination of individual experiences where the researcher is an interpreter of participants' telling and retelling of their experiences (MacKay, 2004). By focusing on the subjective experiences of the individual (Robson, 2002), a phenomenological approach could facilitate exploration of lived experience. Therefore, in the early stages of research design and literature review, I considered phenomenology for this study.

Phenomenology offered an approach that was suited to examination of young people's experiences over a prolonged period (Cresswell, 2003). It appeared that phenomenology resembled ethnography in its approach to making meaning by examining experiences and perspectives, rather than constructing a theoretical fit. Further, phenomenological research is interested in 'suspending common sense beliefs…to approach things without predispositions based on events in the past' (Denscombe, 2010, p. 99). On one hand, this was useful in a study about youth work where challenging common sense beliefs underpinned a critical pedagogy for emancipatory practice. Yet, a critical pedagogy also seeks to make history visible in order to repair the

damage of past domination (Giroux, 2005). Critical pedagogy suggests that past events are important in decoding and challenging common sense views.

Further, phenomenology appears distinct in suggesting that human action is influenced by the individual, who makes meaning separately from external factors (O'Donnel, 1997). Countering this idea of human action as an individual experience, the literature review had suggested that equality was a 'collective social endeavour' (see p. 38) and that social relationships and associations were important aspects of youth work.

The epistemological standpoint for this study was underpinned by consideration of how social and historical influences impacted on claims to knowledge. Thus, I rejected phenomenology in favour of ethnography, which was interested in both the individual and in the influence of external and cultural factors.

Action Research

I considered action research because it takes a problem solving approach to practitioner research, where those involved reflect on practice, which leads to greater understanding of their field (Edwards and Talbot, 1999). In action research the researcher is actively involved as the main driver of change in the setting. The work is cyclical, as each action phase is followed by review, leading to new targets for the next phase of action. Cohen and Manion have defined action research as:

> Essentially an on-the-spot procedure designed to deal with a concrete problem located in an immediate situation…so as to bring about lasting benefit to the ongoing process itself rather than to some future occasion.
>
> Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 192)

Thus, action research informs the process of theorising through analysis of problems encountered in the situation and might have been useful in this study.

However, given the reflective, cyclical and ongoing processes involved, my position as external researcher precluded this approach. Furthermore, the study aims were specifically focused on young people's experiences rather than practice, which again suggested this approach as inappropriate for this research.

Finally, as this study aimed to examine and provide detailed description of young people's lives, within a specific setting, I wondered if it might also be described as a single case study (Stake, 1995; Robson, 2002; Gillham, 2000).

Case Study

Case study seemed to be an obvious option for this research because it was located in a specific youth work setting.

Yin (1994) identified six different types of case study, ranging from those that help confirm an existing theory to those that reveal new theories. Stake (1995) identified three types of case study based on understanding a specific phenomenon better, developing or refining theory or exploring a multiple-case with more than one source.

Odell (2001) proposed that case study incorporates a whole research family that embraces seven categories in relation to a specific setting. These categories range from descriptive accounts (that simply record the story of a particular case) to a theory informing or deviant case (where theories are tested against the most likely or most deviant position). Outlining a range of different types of case study Odell (2001) also suggested a mix of purposes that are influential to the formation of research questions and, for example, participant selection.

This range of case study typologies suggested that the researcher could both describe the case and interpret how the young people's experiences contributed to understanding of it. This meant that I could capture information and use this to describe young people's experiences but would also

acknowledge any such description as my interpretation of those experiences (Bell, 1999; Gillham, 2000; Stake, 1995).

Further, Stake (1995) identified that when the case itself is of interest, in this instance the young people within a youth work setting, the research should be called an intrinsic case study. He also identified that where the case was being used to gain insights or understandings beyond the specific case, in this instance how youth work may contribute to young people's perceptions and experiences of equality beyond the immediate setting, the research should be called an instrumental or extrinsic case study. The instrumental interests may be external to the young people but subject to examination and interpretation because they formed the context of young people's experiences.

Understanding of the extrinsic case may be extended through description of the instrumental or individual experiences (Stake, 1995). This argument proposes that despite lacking ability to be generalised, examination of the unique case context facilitates an enhanced description of the case setting and of participant experience.

In particular, Erickson (1986) suggested that case studies relied not only on researcher interpretations of the people in the case, but the people's own interpretations of what is happening there. According to Stake (1995), this means that the researcher records data about what is happening but also 'simultaneously examines its meaning and redirects observation to refine or substantiate those meanings…the function of the qualitative researcher during data gathering is clearly to maintain vigorous interpretation' (Stake, 1995, pp. 8-9). In this sense I understood that building an understanding of a single case would be an iterative process developed over time and including more than one period of data collection.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have suggested that by analogy, description of a single case makes an original contribution to the whole research area. They argue that the reader of a case study may compare this to settings they are familiar with and so, for example, a single youth work case study could be used by youth workers to extend understanding about youth work in similar

settings. In this way, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the formation of research questions and participant selection, together with writing up and production of articles for academic publication, strengthen the contribution a case study makes to discourse.

Thus, case study offered an opportunity to examine young people's experiences of equality in a single case setting, while ethnography offered an opportunity to examine the social and cultural experiences of young people, as a social group in that setting, and so I adopted ethnographic case study as the methodology for this study.

Ethnographic Case Study

Smith (2002) suggests ethnography as the presentation of two intersecting dialogues that are interpreted within the researcher's choice of discourse. This suggests that the social discourse of the setting would be interpreted within my own discourse. The intersection would act as a conduit between the views of young people with those of the researcher which could include examination of both the experiences and perspectives of young people's social reality (as told by them) and the meanings and analysis of findings (as interpreted by the researcher).

Arguably this could contribute to the creation of new knowledge by bringing the young people's experiences within the youth work context (as told by them) into view through my interpretation of their experiences of the youth work context.

As the ethnography focussed on a distinct social setting, with the intersecting dialogue specific to a single case and so, I decided that ethnographic case study was the underpinning methodological approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). This underpinning approach as ethnographic case study meant that knowledge was created by connecting thin description with contextualised thicker description (Geertz, 1973). Thus, my descriptions or explanations were further contextualised by more detailed interpretation of the meaning that these events and perspectives had for those young people involved in the setting.

My earlier examination of ethnography led me to identify that it involved examination of naturally occurring phenomena (Robson, 2002; Conteh et al. 2005). I was concerned that although youth work takes place in an informal educational setting (Jeffs and Smith, 1999), the suggestion that it is naturally occurring may be contested because it is in a public building, staffed by youth workers and caretakers with a planned programme of intervention. However, it has been suggested that the term, naturally occurring, embraces,

> A wide range of interactional events…[which]…encompasses everything from casual encounters between family and friends to interaction that takes place in institutional and workplace contexts, to interaction that is produced in the course of scientific research itself.
>
> Clayman and Gil (2004, p. 591)

Therefore, this definition was applied to the youth work setting as a place for social interaction and learning amongst friends and between young people and youth workers, where adult interactions (in this case, the researcher) with young people (in this case, the research participant) were considered a natural occurrence. Having identified the setting as naturally occurring, and confirmed the ethnographic case study approach, I then needed to decide which research methods to use. To help me decide, I undertook a pilot study.

3.2 The pilot study

Introduction

I interpreted the purpose of the pilot study as a test of methods of data collection and analysis that could be used in the main study. This enabled me to practice research skills and to take young people's views about research methods into account in decisions about which methods to use in the main study. This limited interpretation of purpose meant that I did not generate a detailed set of findings from analysis of data. Rather, I used the pilot to

produce preliminary information for each of the methods piloted, in order to consider how these might be used in the main study.

Despite this limitation, I learned a lot from piloting data collection and analysis methods. For example, this was useful in helping me to refine the research questions and to learn about data collection methods. It also helped to create a thematic code that I adapted and applied to data in the main study. Thus, while I did not produce a discrete set of findings, this section draws on the lessons learned in order to show how piloting methods, helped in taking forward the main study.

The section is developed in four parts. First, it introduces the pilot case setting and outlines its aims, objectives and initial research questions. Second, it examines the lessons learned from piloting data collection and analysis methods and includes three sections on how these were subsequently used in the main study. Third, it shows how I generated a code that could be applied to analysis of data in the main study. Finally, the lessons learned were used to identify research questions that were amended in light of the pilot study.

3.2.1 The pilot study and early research aims

Introducing the pilot case study setting

The setting for the pilot case study was the same as the main study. Thus, it is introduced here with more detailed description in chapter five, which examines why young people attended the setting. In introducing the pilot, it is useful to know that the setting was a purpose built youth facility in a town in West-Central Scotland. Managed by a local authority, the programme was developed in partnership with a range of public and voluntary sector agencies. The facility incorporated a large sports hall, three general purpose rooms for groupwork and specific activity, such as drama or strategy gaming, an arts studio and a recording/rehearsal studio. The setting included a café space, designed to enable young people to hang around and mix informally and could

be configured in a variety of ways for different purposes. This served as the hub of the facility, where young people and youth workers engaged in conversation and spent time getting to know each other.

The size and scope of the café area accommodated groups of young people hanging around in seated areas and more secluded spaces for small scale activity or informal discussions. The café incorporated a counter area for serving snacks and sweets and an open area, where digital gaming, dancing or performance space could comfortably hold a larger audience of over a hundred and fifty people.

In this setting, there were opportunities within the café area and in some programmes for an open and exploratory dialogue as the starting point for learning. There were also programmes that were established in response to a particular problem or issue, identified by local and national government or youth work agencies as a strategic concern that was important to young people. Thus, a mix of youth work approaches was taken.

I had known the setting for approximately 30 years, during which it had changed many times, yet retained a reputation across Scotland as a good example of generic youth work. In 1999, the setting had undergone a transformation as part of a review of youth work and youth services, conducted by the local authority. Thus, I selected the setting because of its history in generic youth work.

Since 1999, I had lost touch with the setting but was aware that it could still be described as generic because it continued to offer a range of open access social space, computing, sports and band concerts or rehearsals. It retained its emphasis on partnership or collaborative working and included projects, such as the international youth exchange, and specific elements, such as disability sports group, youth café and youth council. Qualified full-time and non-qualified, part-time or voluntary youth workers, did not differentiate between working in open access, generic and specialist activity. Thus, all were considered generic to the setting, as defined in the introduction to this study.

Aims and Objectives

The pilot aimed to examine how young people perceived and experienced equality in one youth work setting. I devised a draft set of objectives, as follows:

(a) To identify the cultural contexts within which young people's lives are constructed in one youth work setting;

(b) To examine theoretical perspectives in relation to the cultural contexts identified in a) above;

(c) To examine theoretical perspectives on the concept of equality;

(d) To explore the young people's experience of equality;

(e) To explore the young people's experience of youth culture.

In order to respond to the above aim and objectives, I used the literature review to devise a series of research questions that the study would try to answer and which could be useful in responding to those objectives.

The following questions provided a starting point for the research project and so they are included here to illustrate how they helped shape the overall research design:

i. What is it like being young [in this town] at the present time? (Obj. a, d and e)
ii. What are the main influences on how young people live their lives? (Obj. a, d and e)
iii. How do young people perceive and experience equality? (Obj. d)
iv. Why and how do these perceptions and experiences persist? (Obj. b, d and e)
v. How is equality manifest within the lives of young people? (Obj. c and d).

I piloted four data gathering methods:

- Interview – semi-structured interview questions, prompt questions and the use of different locations and settings for interview;

- Observation – two-minute observation grid incorporating a checklist of pre-coded observable episodes (such as gender and race); open observation schedule incorporating context and setting information, observations and immediate researcher reflections;

- E-Diary – participants completed diaries on topics of their own choosing and used prompts to facilitate writing;

- Text messaging – pre-determined grid for texts to be sent, from the young people to me, with either negative or positive code attached.

Seven young people participated in the pilot: three young people were each interviewed once and observed twice; observation of the setting was undertaken five times; there were two participants for each of diary entry and text messaging.

3.2.2 Lessons learned from using semi-structured interview, observation, e-diary and text messaging

The pilot study enabled me to test a range of methods. I wanted to discover what worked best in capturing data from young people in a youth work setting.

Semi-structured interview lessons from the pilot

Interviews lasted between 40-50 minutes and used interview prompts that encouraged young people to think about the research interests without leading them in a preconceived direction. I used conversational language to frame interviews because this was similar to the informal and conversational approach used in the setting. Young people were familiar with this approach,

so I believed it would put them at ease. Interview prompts asked about perspectives and experiences and were aligned to research questions such as:

- Can you tell me a bit about your life at the moment? (RQ 1 and 4)
- What does it feel like to be young in [this place] just now? (RQ 1 and 4)
- What does a typical day in your life look like? (RQ 2 and 4)
- Who are the important people in your life and why? (RQ 2)
- You know this study is about equality, what does that mean to you? (RQ 3 and 4)
- How would you define equality? (RQ 3)

A relaxed informal interview style appeared to facilitate the creation of rapport and the exploration of potentially sensitive areas. By listening carefully to responses and then repeating questions to provide a focus on the topic, I could steer young people away from disclosure of unconnected information, without leading them. Question prompts helped me to maintain focus, and then clarification was sought by using 'why' and 'how' questions to probe more deeply (Bell, 1999; Robson, 2002). For example, participants were asked to explain topics they raised: You said…can you tell me a bit more about that? Why was that? Why do you think that happened? (see Appendix D).

The creation of rapport was beneficial in enabling the young people to build trust and to share information and ideas with me. I was also able to build rapport by chatting with participants in the café, or by joining in conversations during band rehearsals, meetings or around the pool table. This helped me to be more integrated into the setting, than if I had simply gathered data and left. However, the benefit of this approach was countered by the time taken for each visit that routinely became two hours or longer.

In interviews, when I asked the young people to tell me about their lives and what it felt like to be young, they introduced the idea of what could be described as youth cultural styles (Bennet and Kahn Harris, 2004; Mizen, 2004; Shildrick, 2000). These were also noted in my observations, on the basis of symbols, such as dress code, hairstyle and musical taste. I asked

supplementary questions to clarify answers given which helped me to gain information about different cultural groups. This information included the young people's views on their associations with others, both inside and outside of the setting, where they suggested that territoriality was a problem that sometimes meant they felt anxious about going to some parts of town.

The young people appeared relaxed and were open in sharing information about their lives and their families. I sensed that this kind of semi-structured conversational interview could be useful in facilitating data collection and offered an opportunity for gathering young people's perspectives, instead of asking them about pre-determined ideas. Despite asking the same questions, pilot interviews took different directions that were useful in gaining insights into young people's perspectives. However, this also signalled a need for me to adopt a more focused approach to the initial questions for use in the main study.

Interviews were also helpful in reducing the chance of misinterpretation or misunderstanding because I could seek clarification from participants, during the interview. Further, Opie (2004) suggests that interviews 'encourage respondents to give their own ideas, feelings, insights, expectations or attitudes' (Opie, 2004, p. 111) and so could offer a valuable way of collecting relevant data.

In the pilot study, a time-lapse of between one and two weeks from briefing to interview, enabled young people to reflect on their decision to participate. This was intended to inform their understanding of the project and increase their capacity to give informed consent to my use of data they provided. However, it also relied on participant memory and capacity to attend later for interview, and this was problematic. For example, there were four missed appointments, and one participant stopped attending the facility altogether. This was interesting in two respects.

First, missed appointments did not signify disinterest. The young people said they had forgotten our planned meeting but assumed we would catch up later.

Second, the period of reflection prior to consent meant that opportunities to engage were lost (as in one person who stopped attending).

Thus, a period between briefing and interview, did not guarantee that participants reflected any more deeply on their participation, than had they been briefed and interviewed simultaneously. This cooling-off period, between briefing and interview, might not therefore be as helpful as expected, and so I decided not to use it in the main study, and to reiterate their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Despite barriers to recruitment and missed appointments, or in using prompt questions that were not focussed enough, the benefits in creating rapport and gaining young people's insights, suggested that semi-structured interview could be used in the main study.

Observation lessons from the pilot

I devised two observation methods to gather data in four different locations. A 'two-minute grid' recorded frequency information against a pre-determined checklist of anticipated equality topics and a detailed field note combined data on context, observed phenomena and researcher reflections (Appendix B).

The two-minute grid enabled me to check for expected events in a numerical form by using a list of anticipated topics (Edwards and Talbot, 1999). The list of anticipated topics was taken from a published list of equality interests (Burchardt and Vizzard, 2007). However, the checklist listed items were not readily observable in the setting and, on reflection I realised that young people's experiences could not be defined by a single observable event that could be recorded on a checklist. Thus, use of a checklist seemed inappropriate for this study.

I found an open observation schedule more useful in capturing a breadth of information, especially where the young people hung around with friends, engaged in conversations and activities that appeared more naturally occurring, for example, in the café. Thus, I developed an observation schedule

with three sections (see Appendix, B) to record context or setting information, what actually happened during the observation period and my initial reflections or thoughts about what happened. This final section was written before leaving the setting, or immediately on my return home, and was treated as raw data.

Field notes recorded in the observation schedule included:

- Verbal and non-verbal interactions
- Lines of communication
- Use of language
- Distinguishing cultural identifiers
- Any visible equality related identifiers in relation to, for example gender, race, age, ability or sexual orientation (as per previous list).

In research literature, observation has been divided into 'unobtrusive observation' and 'participant comprehension' (Collins, 1984, pp. 55-56). These ideas were important because my observations were carried out in spaces that young people had to some extent made their own by, for example rearranging chairs, or sitting on the floor in a corner, where adults who were not youth workers were not routinely expected to hang around.

This made it difficult to remain unobtrusive or to claim that my presence did not affect the atmosphere or others' behaviour. Despite having a youth work background I did not present myself as a youth worker and so had no legitimate reason for being present, other than data collection, thus could not be described as a participant observer (Lacy, 1976).

Usefully, Collins (1984) proposed the concept of participant comprehension as a means of positioning researchers, participating in the day-to-day elements of a setting, in order to gather data and interpret their understandings or misunderstandings of observed phenomena. Collins (1984) suggests that comprehension was informed by observing regular or routine activity, rather than special events created for the purpose of data collection. This seemed most suited to my role in seeking to interpret young people's perspectives and

experiences and so I decided to gather data at times when the young people were involved in regular activities.

This helped to give me a sense of the setting while the young people were participating in a range of activities such as playing pool, hanging around the café, going to meetings, but not as a participant observer who would primarily be part of the setting, such as a youth worker.

Observations as participant comprehension enabled me to make judgements about observations by joining in with activity and conversations, rather than standing on the outside or only viewing things from an outsider's perspective. In light of this, I decided that observation would be a useful way of gathering data in the main study but that the two-minute grid would not be used.

E-Diary lessons from the pilot

I asked participants to write about an incident of equality (directly related to themselves or something observed such as a television programme), however they chose to define it and how they felt about it. I did not provide a definition or discuss this with either of the participants because, in ethnography, it was important to draw meaning from the young people. In the pilot, one person said this was about how people were treated compared to others and the other person said it was about equal opportunities and everyone having the same chance as anyone else to do the things they wanted. The aim was for diaries to be purposefully written with the topic of equality in mind (Palen and Salzman, 2006). I produced a series of open prompts to facilitate the writing process. These included, 'I have chosen to write about something that happened when…' and, 'I chose to write about this because…'. To minimise literacy problems a scribe was offered and an alternative format suggested. Neither option was taken up but I felt it was important to offer alternative methods, to enable young people to articulate their views.

Taking the prompted responses together provided an indication of young people's perspectives as illustrated in the following extract from Joan's diary:

> [I thought about equality when]….me and my friends were talking outside of the centre [shopping mall] when the security moved us, just because we are young. There were old people standing across from us but they never got moved…[this made me feel]…angry and annoyed…[because]…yeah, fair enough we might have been blocking the door but so were the old people, so why didn't they get moved as well?
>
> Joan, 17

This extract suggested that using e-diary was useful in gaining insights into young people's experiences of equality. This was not surprising as participants were asked to focus on equality and prompted to write about feelings. However, collecting data this way was not straightforward.

Initially, I assumed that participants would write a page or two for each entry and return this the following week. However, this resulted in weeks of deferment and revealed the young people's misconceptions of the task as resembling a school essay, rather than a more personal account of their ideas. Follow-up discussions shaped e-diary into an electronic environment (Bolger, Davies and Rafaeli, 2003) because the young people suggested it would be easier to e-mail it when they completed it at home. An advantage of the electronic format was that it enabled completion at a more convenient time for the young people:

> I'd rather send it by e-mail 'cause it's quicker and I'd write more…[at home]…than if I was sitting in here writing with other people around.
>
> Greig, 16

This suggested that Greig preferred the detachment of e-mail to, for example, writing something within the youth work setting. Thus, using e-diary appeared to reduce the need for face-to-face meetings, which one young person identified as a bonus. It also appeared to encourage these young people's

participation on their own terms and in ways that Bolger, et al. (2003) suggested as convenient.

However, time and effort were required in tracking down participants and chasing diary entries. This was a protracted process involving my sending five e-mails to each of the young people and I made four extra visits to the setting, hoping to catch them there. Three of the youth workers also helped, by reminding the young people to send me an e-mail. Finally, one did send me an e-mail from home and one gave a paper copy to a worker to pass on to me.

Thus, despite saying they were okay about writing diaries, and preferred to write these at home, the young people did not respond well to this method. They needed encouragement and missed deadlines. Yet, the diaries produced no additional information than interview prompt and observations. Thus, while they could be used to corroborate other findings, I decided not to use e-dairy for the main study because there were more barriers than benefits in its use, for both the young people and myself. However, I would consider adapting this method in future for example using an on-line blog or a forum on a social networking site, or a more contemporary tool that young people already use.

Text Messaging lessons learned from the pilot

I chose to pilot text-messaging because of the increased use of mobile phones as a 'technology of freedom, of connectivity and of safety' (Campbell, 2006, p. 196). During a three-hour period, participants sent texts when anything that caused them to think about equality occurred (see appendix, C). I did not provide a definition of equality because I wanted young people to select events that they thought were relevant to equality, however they defined it. This meant that during the pilot, I avoided discussing the topic or meaning of equality with the young people who participated, in a deliberate attempt to start with their own views and understandings of the topic.

However, to help with texting, I provided a list of topic categories they might encounter but stressed they might not, and that if they encountered categories that I had not thought of they could still use these to describe what prompted

their thinking about equality. The list of topic categories included age, gender, race, religion, sexuality and 'other' (to enable young people to devise their own categories, where one was not provided).

I also thought text messaging was an easy and credible way of engaging young people because they all used mobile phones, and so this seemed to be a plausible and trusted way of engaging them in research, by using familiar, everyday technology. The use of mobile phone was identified as, 'desirable because it is cool and exciting, yet convenient and practical' (Campbell, 2006, p. 202). Texting was suggested by others as also offering an effective way of involving young people in research (Ito and Daiskue, 2004). Like e-dairies, texting appeared to facilitate participation at a convenient time for the young people, for example, they were in control of when to send a text.

Another advantage was that their meaning of equality was ascribed (positive or negative) by the young people, on the basis of their life experiences and meanings. Thus, to an extent they were using their own frames of reference for making meaning. The texts provided a simple frequency count in the number of times a specific category was noted. However, additional contact time, of approximately five to ten minutes was required for participants to explain the stimulus and meaning of each of their texts.

Thus, the pilot demonstrated this may have been helpful as a combined method, involving both text and follow-up interview to strengthen understanding. Yet, while use of mobile phones was a regular part of young people's daily routine (Taylor and Harper, 2003), restrictions on their use in schools meant that participants were unable to send some texts and then forgot to send them later. Revision of the fieldwork timeframe and negotiated access to schools could have resolved this problem. However, there were also financial considerations regarding text and phone costs, and delays were experienced, because one young person had no credit on her phone.

Overall, text messaging provided a contemporary and accessible way of capturing information and a potentially useful way of engaging young people. This could be enhanced by phone-enabled video or photographic capture to

stimulate discussion. However, this would also bring additional ethical concerns in terms of seeking permissions, and in potentially reduced capacity for anonymity which would compromise confidentiality. Further, the need for follow-up interviews, placed an additional burden on young people's time, but did not generate new data. Thus, I decided not to use texting in the main study.

Having piloted four research methods, I produced the following table to show how they were each used and to display the advantages and disadvantages that were suggested by both researcher and/or participants:

Method Used (number in pilot)	How this method was used	Advantages	Disadvantages
Interview *3 x Semi structured face to face interviews*	A list of pre-set questions plus some additional prompt questions, where needed.	Face to face; can probe more deeply; able to clarify understanding; avoids literacy blocks	Time consuming; 'no show' and forgotten appointments
Observation *10 x Observation Grid* *5 x Observation Schedule*	Observation Grid/ Checklist of setting and inequality code. Detailed observation schedule	Quick; Checks for pre-set topics. Context and setting info.; observation of episodes; space for researcher reflections	Time consuming; Based on researcher recall, knowledge and interpretation
E-Diary *(2 x e-diary)*	E-mailed diary entries; used prompts to start writing	Convenient for young people; Remote location; Captured feelings; Topic specific; No need for face to face	Relies on memory to complete; illiteracy may be a barrier
Text Messaging *(2 x texting)*	Used Pre-determined grid to record texts	Quick; Immediate Response; Credible; Meaning ascribed by young person; accessible.	Requires explanation; Relies on event recall capacity;

Table (ii)
The advantages and disadvantages of methods used in the pilot study

In light of piloting these methods, I decided to use semi-structured interview and observation in the main study.

3.2.3 How I used observations to gather data in the main study

I used observations in the main study because the pilot had shown that observing young people in an informal social setting enabled me to see, at first hand, their actions and to hear their conversations in a relaxed environment to reveal 'characteristics of groups or individuals that would have been impossible to discover by other means' (Bell, 1999 p.156). Thus, observation was purposeful in gathering data, yet minimised the time commitment required to help sustain young people's involvement. For example, observing them while participating in groups or socialising with friends, did not require young people to give additional time commitment because they were already present and going about their usual activities.

Although the young people in the study were the focus of my observations because of their interactions with friends and others in the setting, any impressions formed included observations of young people and youth workers who were not direct participants. Those young people and youth workers were briefed and consented to this peripheral role within ethical research practice.

In addition to asking young people about their patterns of attendance, I also made 42 visits to the facility, during which I undertook 49 periods of observation, which helped me to see the range of available activities which were offered by participants as reasons for attendance. My observations enabled me to check the veracity of their claims by noting the range of activities available.

I produced detailed field notes as outlined in the pilot to record factual information about the setting and to describe what young people did during the observation period. I also continued to note my impressions about the mood within the setting, based on my interpretation of verbal and non-verbal communication cues and recorded initial reflections on what had happened.

Observation field notes helped me to develop interview questions. I observed young people in the café or during meetings and then later, during interviews could refer back to their comments in the café or meeting to probe more deeply into what they meant in making those comments.Thus, insights gained through observation helped me to revise prompt questions for interviews for example, when I observed a young person doing something or discussing something linked to equality, I could then draw on this to prompt discussion in interview. The following extract from an observation schedule shows how I used these to gather data, and also how this helped to set up a future observation:

Observation Schedule (Extract from Sandra Three)

Date: 24th Jan, 2007 Time: 7.15 – 9pm

Context/ Setting:

Cold night but busy in the café. DS in the games hall and Room 2. Band rehearsing. Computing room busy too (DS/ Mixed)

Direct Observations:

See Sandra and her crew at the door when I arrive…go to the café and sit with Sandra's crowd. They are talking about the youth exchange… she says plans aren't going well but she's staying involved…I ask why they are not going well…she says because people have dropped out and they are waiting for a meeting to plan things. I asked if I could come to the meeting, she says she'll get me in no problem!

Immediate Reflections

It was good to sit in on the group conversation and find out about the exchange and forthcoming meeting. When Sandra said she'd 'get me in no problem' I felt this demonstrated a level of connection and trust between us that suggested she was comfortable with my being around, and with her own participation in the study.

This extract shows how I devised an observation schedule that recorded factual information about the context (date time, weather, location) and what happened (as I observed the setting) and then made initial field notes that needed following up. The above extract led me to attend a youth exchange meeting and produce further observations:

Observation Schedule (extract from International Exchange One)

Date: 22nd May 2007 Time: 7.30 – 8.30

Context/ Setting

International Exchange group meeting. This involved Sandra, Craig and Paula so is a treble hitter!

Direct Observations

<table><tr><td>The group appeared to be relaxed with each other and had a good relationship with the worker. They all laughed and joked throughout the meeting but also worked through the agenda which included how they could raise funds to keep the exchange affordable for everyone (the cost is around £30 per person so a big fund-raising effort is needed), what the programme might be like… a variety of ‘orientation’ issues (including acceptable behaviour, cultural difference, language learning and meeting with ‘other’ groups).

The young people were involved in deciding what to do about programme…BUT…it appeared that they lacked confidence and autonomy to take decisions as they always asked, or sought permission from the worker….who kept pointing out that it was largely up to them and they didn’t need her permission…which is when the subject of ‘inappropriate kissing’ came up….this was a source of great laughter and was clearly an ‘in-joke’ but because I was not on the inside of it, I could not speculate on what it meant.

The youth worker looked directly at Sandra when she raised her voice</td></tr></table>

for emphasis and said, ‘and there will be NO inappropriate kissing’, to which they all laughed but a point was being made.

Immediate Reflections

The international exchange seemed to be linked to equality in thinking about cultural difference. But I hadn’t expected the discussion of costs in terms of alleviating poverty which was directly linked to issues of financial inequality. I was also surprised to observe that when offered a share of power in decision making the young people deferred to the youth worker, and so again I might try to find out more about young people’s perspectives on why this happened in second interviews.

I was also unsure about what the reference to ‘inappropriate kissing’ meant so will try to follow-up in interviews. Sandra seemed to be at the heart of this ‘incident’ so I could ask her about it in the second interview???

Observing the youth exchange meeting helped me to record data on young people’s thinking about difference and as, the above extract shows, it also identified follow on questions for interviews. In this way, observations enabled me to pursue young people’s perspectives on equality in ways that would not have been possible, if interview questions were devised in isolation of observations. This also reduced the influence of my previous experiences of youth work and my earlier knowledge of this setting by creating questions based on contemporary observations of young people, as distinct from any previous knowledge of youth work or the setting.

3.2.4 How I used semi-structured interview to gather data in the main study

I was interested in how interviews had been conducted in a study of youth and social class, utilising locations where young people were likely to hang out. This included the streets and a youth café and suggested that research was, ‘conducted more on the terms of the interviewee (young person) rather than

the interviewer' (McCulloch, Stewart and Lovegreen, 2006, p. 545). I decided to conduct interviews in settings where young people were comfortable and I devised informal prompts, rather than structured uniform questions (see Appendix D).

I also followed Rich (2005) by varying the order and detail where, 'detail and variance in topics were structured by the nature of the interaction between author [researcher] and each participant thereby generating very different interviews' (Rich, 2005, p. 497). Thus, I changed the order in which I asked questions to create a more conversational flow in interviews.

I also engaged in conversations with young people who were involved in the study and some who were not. I participated in activity, such as playing pool or activities in the café or arts room. Interviews were conducted at times that were convenient for young people, for example, before or after they played sports or went to an exchange meeting. This meant I attended on a pre-arranged evening but the specific interview time was flexible.

In keeping with the ethnographic approach, an informal conversational style of questioning offered more naturally occurring insights, than a directed list of closed questions. By starting with the same open-ended prompts I was able to elicit information for on each of the three research questions and objectives in an open but systematic way.

In each phase I asked open and clarifying questions to encourage participants to explain what they meant. Semi-structured interviews were intended to enable young people to say more or consider their thoughts, beyond a short answer in response to specific questions. So, I followed open questions by asking them to tell me about the experiences that prompted their thinking. I encouraged them to talk freely about topics that they introduced as important, not only topics that I asked them about. Bell (1999) suggests that when used as gentle prompts, informal questions help to retain focus on the topic and to probe more deeply when needed.

A different set of questions and prompts were devised for each research question and so responded to different objectives. Phase I was about finding out about their participation in the facility, their experiences of equality and how they perceived this within the youth work setting. Phase II was about updating information on their experiences and perceptions and seeking to explore themes or topics from the first phase:

RQ 1. Why do young people attend the youth work setting?

Phase 1

How often do you come to [the setting]?

Why do you come to the [setting]?

Phase 2

Since the last time we met… has your involvement/participation in [setting] stayed the same or changed? In what way - how? Why was this?

Has the place or programme changed since the last time we met? In what way…how? Why?

RQ 2. Do young people perceive and experience equality in the youth work setting?

Phase 1

You know this study is about equality, do you think [this place] has anything to do with that topic? Can you tell me why you say that? What makes you think that?

Are all the young people who come here the same? In what ways are young people different from each other?

Are there any similarities? Can you tell me about those too?

Can you tell me about your experiences of equality in [the setting]? Why do you think this is like that?

Do you think young people are treated fairly in [this setting]? Why do you think this? What does this mean to you?

Have you ever felt that you were treated differently from someone else? Was this a positive or negative experience? Why was this? How did this happen?

Phase 2

Since the last time we met, have any of your ideas about equality changed? How? In what ways have they changed or stayed the same? Why do you think this?

Remember we talked about whether people were the same or different last time….how do you feel about that now? Have any of your ideas changed? How? Why?

The last time we talked you said….[whatever]…do you still think that? Is that still important to you? Are you still doing that?... or involved in that?

RQ 3. Does youth work, as practiced in this setting, help young people to learn about equality?

Phase 1

What does equality mean to you? What is equality about? How would you define it? Why do you think this?

Thinking about [the setting] in particular, does anything about coming here or meeting the youth workers make a difference to your thinking about equality? If so, in what ways? How and why? What makes you think this? Do you ever discuss [equality stuff] with anyone else up here, why? Why them? Why not?

Are you aware of anything to do with equality [however you define it] that happens here? Can you tell me about these things? How often do they happen? Why do you think these things happen? Who is involved in these things…you…and/or…who else?

Thinking about [youth work setting] in particular, how does coming here make a difference to your thinking about equality? If so, in what ways? How and why? How not/ why not?

Phase 2

Since our last meeting, have you noticed anything in or around [the setting] that you think is about this topic? Has anything happened since last time that has made a difference to how you think or act about this? Why do you think that is? Why is that?

From the last time I was here…some people said (or you said)…xxxx what do you think about that (now)? Why? Anything you'd like to add about that?

What difference does having youth workers around make?

Thinking about what you said before about equality and what it means…can you think of an example of something in here that makes you think about equality or that demonstrates equality or inequality in [setting].

Since our last meeting has anything changed or did you notice anything else you'd like to tell me about?

3.2.5 Using secondary sources of information

Secondary data were gathered through systematic ongoing review of literature from the UK and international sources to inform discussion of findings and provide differing perspectives (Robson, 2002). This included evidence and

information from national or government agencies that showed current policy and practice contexts for youth work in the UK and other countries.

Secondary sources included strategic documents and plans that were available in the setting and on the internet. I consulted the local youth strategy to compare this with what the young people told me about their role in developing the strategy. I also examined documentation related to the youth council and the local youth strategy in comparison with UK literature and international perspectives on young people, equality and youth work. Empirical data were supplemented by information from social artefacts, such as wall posters and policy documents to inform my interpretation and understanding of data. These secondary sources were useful in comparing young people's perspectives with strategic policy documents about youth work and youth services. Sources were identified through regular internet searches and by gathering data when I visited the setting. This included leaflets and information left lying around and I took photographs of posters on the walls.

Although I did not gather secondary evidence on all of my visits to the setting and took only 16 photos of posters, I found that reading the posters and leaflets that were left around the setting helped me in three ways. First, I was able to get a 'feel' for the setting, for example as posters informed me about what happened on the nights I did not attend. Second, they gave me point of contact when talking to young people. I could ask them about an event or whether they knew about an advertised programme, as a way into conversations around the café or at the pool table. Third, they sometimes helped me to make sense of comments that young people made in conversation about programmes I knew nothing about, but could gain some understanding by reading a poster.

Thus, 'multiple sources' (Robson, 2002, p. 174) were used by me to triangulate information. For example, by checking where possible, what young people said against the information on posters, or from an on-line project information, I was able to confirm the veracity of their claims or to identify inconsistencies in their perceptions compared to the 'official view' or policy information. All of this enhanced rigour in the research process. Drawing on

data from interview, observation and other sources helped increase my understanding of the setting and so built trustworthiness in my analysis of findings. The next section returns to the lessons from the pilot to show how I developed my analysis.

3.2.6 Generating a code and coding data

The inductive nature of this study suggested that coding should happen after data collection. This is known as open coding where, 'the researcher forms initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied from the initial data gathered' (Robson, 2002, p. 194). Thus, coding was based on a specific analytical framework (Boyatzis, 1998), which incorporated a process of open coding, in order to develop a thematic analysis.

This section details how I used Boyatzis' (1998) Thematic Analysis Framework (TAF) to reduce data into a manageable form by identifying categories and emerging themes and to generate a code that could be used in the main study. During the pilot study this involved:

- Coding data
- Grouping coded data together to create thematic categories
- Developing a code that could be applied to data in the main study.

In coding data, Boyatzis discussed 'finding a codable moment' (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 3) whereby anyone using thematic analysis differentiates between simply seeing something as an occurrence, and seeing something as important enough to give it a name or a label. By naming something through coding it, Boyatzis argues that we develop ways of seeing things that can be used to group similarly coded items together, and so create thematic categories drawn from data.

During the pilot I practised this new way of seeing or sensing themes. I marked each transcript with a highlighter pen using a different colour or way of marking (such as circling words or scoring them across, horizontally and diagonally). Each time a new idea was mentioned, I coded it in a different

colour or way of marking (using broken or jagged lines to highlight text). This resulted in naming 29 coded items that were grouped together to create seven thematic categories (See Appendix E)

The sensing of themes (Boyatzis, 1998) was achieved by bringing together all of the information provided by participants in interview transcripts, observations, e-diaries and texts in order to identify categories and themes from the young people, rather than invent themes, or draw on existing theoretical perspectives, and then try to shoe-horn their experiences into those pre-existing ideas. Boyatzis (1998) described this as inductive research, where themes are sensed through an approach that draws on grounded theory to suggest the possibility of 'impressionistic understandings of what is being described…by participants' (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 51). I was concerned about the consistency of my coding because I had never done this before. I used three methods to alleviate these concerns.

First, I asked two people (one from a different youth work setting and one who is a community consultant) to read over the data and check if my decisions on how to code particular data in a particular way, were consistent with their views about coding and categorising the same data, under the same kind of category labels. This modified three of the categories by suggesting that in addition to the themes I had placed them in, they could each also be added to another theme. This meant that categories appeared in more than one theme but did not change the three category headings.

Second, after I had coded all transcripts and identified themes, I left the data for three months, while I developed my literature review and a conference paper on the methods used in the pilot. This period away from data meant that I could repeat the coding process on unmarked transcripts (three interviews, two e-diaries, two sets of text messages, and nine observations). This break enabled me to check whether data were coded and grouped together under similar themes in order to mitigate coding-bias as a result of my proximity to the setting or how I was feeling at the time of initial coding. This led me to revise the names of two category labels but these stayed in their original theme category. By the end of this process of re-coding I was confident that my

immersion in the setting and proximity to data had not overly influenced coding, although I acknowledge that this process was always based on my interpretation of data which someone else might interpret differently.

Further, this process of coding and sensing themes, after time away from data, created distance between me and the data, which increased the likelihood of my relying on data, rather than my recollection or immediate interpretation of events, which could be less reliable.

Third, repeated checking of transcripts also enabled me to look for alternative meanings and to reflect on the information available from within the setting at this time. I kept reading and making notes until I ran out of possible meanings and then re-read the data, in light of those different possible meanings. This increased my confidence in deciding which meanings were a good fit and through this iterative process of reading, writing and checking my interpretation of meaning, I became confident about identifying themes.

3.2.7 Lessons learned from coding and analysis of data

The pilot helped me to complete the first two stages in Boyatzis' TAF. Boyatzis suggests a hybrid approach is needed where there is no opportunity for criterion referenced comparison of themes because only one unit of analysis exists (the single case):

> A hybrid approach is necessary if the researcher wants to use an inductive approach…[where]… thematic analysis still contributes by providing a clear set of steps to follow in analysing the information, standards of a quality code, sensitivity to sampling issues in units of analysis and coding, and ideas about obtaining consistency of judgements
>
> Boyatzis (1998, p. 52)

This extract suggests that Boyatzis' TAF can be adapted to suit an inductive approach, even in studies where there is only a single case unit of analysis. Although a full analysis requires criterion referenced comparison, at a basic

level Boyatzis' framework offers a systematic means of sensing themes and developing analysis. I had already determined that this study would take an inductive approach and so this suggested that despite my study being a single case, and therefore unable to follow every aspect of the Boyatzis' coding process, I could adapt TAF for use in the main study.

Given my initial interpretation of the purpose of a pilot study, it would be fair to suggest that while the pilot enabled me to test methods, the low number of participants and lack of detailed analysis meant it was of limited value in helping me to answer draft research questions. However, the pilot did help me to clarify the methods I would use in the main study and to refine the research questions in order to assert the study focus. It also enabled me to develop a code that could be applied to data in the main study.

Identifying initial theme categories and a code

Coding and grouping sub-theme categories together created initial theme categories:

- When young people talked about race, age, being treated fairly and were observed in relation to gender roles and the power dynamic within the setting, I grouped these together and named them as **aspects of difference**.
- When young people made reference to time and place and expressed some sense of immediate or future action, I grouped these together under the heading of **being and becoming**.

- When young people talked about outside influences such as school, college and the family, I grouped them together and named them as **structural influences**.

- When young people mentioned feelings, respect, trust and emotional states such as anger or happiness, I grouped these together and named them as **well-being**.

- When young people made reference to style, musical tastes, young teams/gangs, territoriality, I grouped these together and named them as **youth culture**.

- When young people were observed interacting with youth workers in the youth work setting, or when they talked about their experiences in the setting, I grouped these together and named them as **youth work elements**.

Towards the end of the pilot, when re-examining data, I found items that were not initially coded because they appeared incidental to the topic, or were indicative of thought processes for example, when a young person said 'I've never thought of that' or 'I don't know about that'. This included noises, often minor utterances, such as 'erm' or 'hmmph'. Following this re-examination and when grouped together, I found that these items could create another theme: which following this re-examination, I coded these comments, noises or expressions as:

- When young people stopped to think, when they were observed making thoughtful suggestions of if they said they were unsure what they thought about something, I grouped these together and named them as **Thinking and Theorising.**

3.2.8 How the lessons learned from the pilot informed the main study

In seeking to understand young people's perspectives and experiences of equality, I used the pilot to check and revise the research aim, objectives and questions in order to provide a clear focus:

> This study aims to examine how young people involved in youth work perceive and experience equality and what they learn about equality from participating in one youth work setting.

I devised five objectives in order to respond to this research problem:

a) Identify why young people attend youth work;
b) Examine young people's perspectives on, and experiences of, equality within one generic youth work setting;
c) Explore how young people's perspectives and experiences of equality were influenced by their involvement in this setting;
d) Identify how young people thought that equality was demonstrated within one generic youth work setting;
e) Consider how youth work contributed to young people's learning about equality.

To meet the above objectives, and build on the lessons learned in the pilot about the need for a clearer emphasis on the youth work setting, I amended the number of research questions from five to three:

RQ 1. Why do young people attend this youth work setting? (Objective a)

RQ 2. Do young people perceive and experience equality in the youth work setting? (Objectives b and d)

RQ 3. Does youth work, as practised in this setting, help young people to learn about equality? (Objectives c and e)

Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the epistemological assumptions that underpinned this research and has examined a range of methodologies, before outlining the ethnographic case study approach taken. The chapter has also discussed the lessons learned from a small pilot study that enabled methods to be piloted and informed the decision to utilise semi-structured interview and observation in the main study. The pilot facilitated the development of a code that could be applied in the main study in order to develop themes for discussion of findings. The aims, objectives and research questions were refined in light of these lessons learned.

4. The main study

Chapter Outline

Having examined the research design and lessons from the pilot study, this chapter focuses on those elements and processes that were specific to the main study. First, it introduces the main study and outlines the coding process that developed as the study unfolded. Second, ethical matters are discussed to show the steps that were taken to prevent risk to participants. Third, information on participants and how they were selected clarifies my sampling strategy and lists each of the young people involved in the main study. Finally, the theoretical framework for analysis is explained.

4.1 Introducing the main study

The main study was based in the same generic youth work location as the pilot, although an 18-month gap meant that the majority of staff and young people there were different to those I met during the pilot. This meant I had to re-negotiate and establish my role as researcher again.

Drawing on lessons learned in the pilot study I persisted with the constructo-interpretive epistemology and ethnographic case study methodology. I also used semi-structured interviews and observations to gather data, and I used the simple form of Boyatzis TAF (1998) to analyse data.

As discussed in the last chapter, Boyatzis has suggested that where there is only one unit of analysis, for example, one person, one organisation or one culture, the application of TAF can be used without criterion referenced comparison (p. 52). The following table shows the stages that Boyatzis' (1998) proposes in developing a thematic analysis. The right hand column describes what I did at each stage in developing analysis in this study:

Stages in Thematic Analysis	How thematic analysis was developed in this study
I Deciding on research design and research sample	Deciding on which methodologies were best suited to study aims and the theoretical framework that informed my research design and sampling.
II Reducing raw information	Initial systematic coding of all data and then collating data together.
III Sensing themes by grouping together	Review collated data to produce initial theme categories.
IV Creating a code	Name, define and describe code, together with examples and exclusions for each theme.
V Determining the reliability of the code	Check and finalise sub-theme labels and categorisation of themes.
VI Interpreting results in response to research questions	I applied the reliable code to the whole sample and identified themes that could be used to response to the research questions.

Table (iii)
Stages in Thematic Analysis for this study

Adapted from Boyatzis (1998, p. 44)

Stage I of the analytical process was developed through the literature review in examining how other youth work research was developed and through the process of gaining ethical approval, when I had to detail my research design and sampling strategy. According to Boyatzis (1998), by taking time to consider research design at the earliest stage of fieldwork, these decisions on methodologies and sampling become part of the analytical process because these are key elements in determining what and how data is analysed. Stages II and III were ongoing and involved coding, collating and sensing themes in both the pilot and main study. Stages IV and V were also developed in the pilot but these were amended during the main study. Stage VI was piloted in a limited way and not fully developed until the final stages of the main study.

Boyatzis (1998) provided an open, yet systematic process, for finding or sensing themes, and for data analysis. In both the pilot and main study findings were produced through a process of ‘progressive focussing’ (Robson, 2002, p. 488). This meant that, as the study developed, the focus shifted from the

general to the specific in describing the young people's experiences of the particular youth work setting.

4.1.1 Using open coding methods to develop and refine initial themes

In the pilot I used Boyatzis' TAF to produce seven initial themes. I followed the same procedures in the main study and coded all interview transcripts and observation schedules in the same way to group data together under seven theme labels: aspects of difference; being and becoming; structural influences; thinking and theorising; well-being; youth culture; youth work elements.

Yet, despite having explained each of these labels and suggested they were useful, over a prolonged period (of at least three years), for grouping similar categories of data together, as I reached the final stages of writing up findings I decided that the labels I applied were not fit for purpose. They were too general to be meaningful and I needed labels that were more focussed on the specifics of the young people's experiences and perceptions of equality in this single case setting.

Reflecting on this, I was able to see how each of the labels attached to the themes could be applied to almost any setting. For example, structural influences, well-being and youth culture could each be applied to many parts of young people's lives, not only their experiences of equality in youth work. Thus, as general labels these did not show anything particular, or new, about the case study context, yet they had provided a useful way of in grouping together sub-theme categories.

I immediately reviewed my coded data and checked the stages in the process of sensing themes. This led me to discover that since the pilot study, I had been using these theme labels simultaneously for two purposes. First, I used them as themes that I treated as findings, for example the well-being 'theme' was identified as a reason why young people attended youth work, to suggest that they attended to improve their well-being. Second, I used these themes as they were identified in the pilot as the code that was applied to data and used to generate findings from the study. This meant that when coding raw data in

the main study, I looked for items that could be put in each of the seven theme headings from the pilot study. Thus, I was using these themes as both findings, and the code through which findings were developed.

In the pilot, I had been clear about how data were coded to generate thematic categories which could then be applied to the main study. By the time I came to coding data in the main study, I continued to use the same thematic categories to systematically code raw data, and so continued to group similar elements together in each thematic category (see Appendix E). However, I had not taken thematic analysis to the next stage, in identifying specific themes, as distinct from thematic categories, that I could suggest were present in the context of this specific case study.

This realisation was pivotal to the analysis and discussion of findings. It brought clarity, by confirming that what I had been calling 'themes', was actually the 'thematic code' which I applied to raw data, in order to group data together, and so produced context specific themes. In light of this realisation, I restructured the analysis and discussion of findings to focus on context specific themes, rather than the theme categories that had framed discussion in earlier versions of my thesis.

I also returned to Boyatzis' framework to consider whether this impacted on my earlier coding of data. Boyatzis distinguished between units of coding, as 'the most basic segment…of the raw data…that can be assessed in a meaningful way' (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63) and the unit of analysis as 'the entity on which the interpretation of the study will focus' (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 62). In the pilot, the units of coding included every utterance by young people and all of the words I wrote in my observation schedule. I continued to use highlighters to code transcripts in the same way, to produce sub-theme categories that were grouped together to form thematic categories. Despite the lateness of my realisation about double use of themes as both code and findings, for the purposes of analysis, the basic unit of coding was defined as the thematic category because it appeared to offer the most meaningful way of grouping and assessing data. In this sense, the study comprised one unit of analysis (the single case youth work setting) and seven units of coding: aspects

of difference; being and becoming; structural influences; thinking and theorising; well-being; youth culture; youth work elements.

As noted earlier, ‘sensing’ was an important part of Boyatzis’ framework. Sensing data is about making sense of participants’ own ideas by getting a feel for their meanings, rather than by introducing existing theories or pre-established codes, in order to analyse how their ideas fit with their existing meanings. In some respects, the identification of context specific themes meant I was able to develop thick descriptions about the young people’s experiences in advance of the final analysis, which could thus be seen as a more authentic description of their experiences.

Therefore, between the pilot and final analysis, a process of revised labelling of theme categories associated with each unit of coding, developed themes for analysis:

- *How young people’s sense of well-being appeared to be enhanced by engaging in a range of social, emotional and cultural elements in youth work (insights from the well-being thematic category - discussed in chapter five);*

- *How young people made sense of experiences inside the setting by considering their experiences from outside of youth work (from the structural influences thematic category – this is discussed in chapter six);*

- *How young people experienced cultural mixing and difference in the setting (from the youth culture thematic category – this is discussed in chapter six);*

- *Volunteering as a way of involving young people in helping others feel good about themselves as they began to take on more adult roles (from the being and becoming thematic category – this is discussed in chapter six);*

- *Young people's views about equality in the youth work setting (from the difference thematic category – this is discussed in chapter seven);*

- *How young people appeared to learn through participation in youth work (from the youth work thematic category – this is discussed in chapter eight).*

These themes provided a focus for discussion going forward from this point in the main study. They also contributed to a detailed discussion of my analysis in chapter nine.

4.2 Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure that research is ethical and trustworthy Conteh et al. (2005) have suggested that this relies on the researcher making ethical judgments that are 'embedded in the day-to-day activity of ethnographic research and not merely ticked off on a checklist or set of guidelines' (p. 101). This section outlines how I addressed ethics in this study. First, it discusses ethical issues and theoretical perspectives in particular relation to research that involves young people. Next, it focuses on the processes of gaining ethical approvals in relation to the university and case setting, and also to the participants themselves. Finally, it focuses on management of ethical concerns, including participant selection.

4.2.1 Overview of ethics in research with young people

There is a growing literature about researching young people's lives that emphasises an interest in hearing the voices of young people, which have previously gone unheard (Blackman, 2007; Conteh, et al., 2005; Heath, Brooks, Cleaver and Ireland, 2009; Walford, 2008). This raised a number of ethical concerns about the range of emotions that could be experienced by the young people during the fieldwork phase of this study. These concerns

appeared to be grounded in what Blackman (2007) has argued is part of the emotional border crossing that is routinely hidden in accounts of ethnographic research.

Although young people have been the focus of research for many years, their participation in research in recent times has been seed as a response to Article 12 of United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (Holland, Renold, Ross and Hillman, 2010). This asserts young people's rights to participate in decisions that affect them. Reflecting Article 12, research engages young people as agents in collaboration with researcher(s) in research processes rather than as objects of researcher examination. One consequence of this shift has been the emergence of a body of work on the practical and ethical implications of doing qualitative research with disengaged young people.

In a practical sense, this meant that I spent time in the café and other social settings taking an interest in young people and their stories, and listening to what they had to say as one way of shifting the inherent power imbalances in my relationship with them (Holland, et al., 2010). This helped to maximise opportunities for informal conversations that brought 'the advantage of responding to the young people's cultural forms of communication (informally and in short bursts) but the disadvantage of being less transparent as a research process' (Holland et al., 2010, p. 369).

4.2.2 Seeking ethical approvals and informed consents

The Code of Practice on Investigations on Human Beings (University of Strathclyde, 2005) provided guidelines on the procedures for gaining ethical approval, which was granted by the University of Strathclyde. All participants gave their consent to the data they provided being used in this report. Their right to anonymity and protection from harm, as a consequence of participation, means that all obvious identifiers, such as project, place or personal names have been omitted. In some instances, readers who are familiar with the locality or youth work discourse may recognise the setting. However by changing names and specific details the identification of individuals is highly unlikely.

A key aspect of this was to seek the informed consent of participants, for data they provided to be used within agreed areas (specifically, the thesis, research reports, published articles or in teaching). To enable young people to give their consent, I took time to brief them and produced information that informed their decisions to participate, or decline to be involved, in this study.

Participant information included an introductory information sheet and consent form that was distributed prior to a briefing meeting (See Appendix A). During five two-hour visits I went around all groups or individuals in the café area, telling them about the study and inviting them to participate. I asked everyone I spoke to if they were interested in participating, and those who said yes, were given an information sheet and invited to meet me later so that I could brief them about the study. I thanked those who said no and said I might see them around the setting another time, but told them I would not bother them again about this study. While there were no obvious signs of peer pressure, I was aware that some young people may have declined to participate because none of their peers expressed an interest or because they were unsure of how their participation might be viewed by friends or youth workers.

In addition to providing information on what I would do with the data they provided, the briefing included explanation of how ethical issues would be managed and how participant anonymity would be protected and maintained through use of pseudonyms. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study and how to do this.

4.2.3 Responding to ethical concerns

Spence et al., (2006) suggested that wider participation in the setting was legitimate and ethical, so long as those involved were aware of my role as a researcher. Thus, in the early stages, or when I met anyone for the first time, I explained why I was there and that hanging around the setting between interviews and outwith specific observation periods, enabled me to join in conversations and gain insights into the setting that could be useful in developing aspects of the case study and in presenting findings for

examination. In particular, I explained that I was doing a PhD and for those who did not know what this was about, I used language and ideas that the young people would be familiar with, including research, homework and I explained the viva as an oral exam.

4.3 Participant Selection, Information and Sampling Strategy

4.3.1 Participant selection

The selection of a non-random, convenience sample (Robson, 2002; Seale, 1998) meant that it was largely drawn from young people who were already engaged in youth work, attended regularly and could be easily contacted. In this sense, the sample was opportunistic and not representative of the entire population of young people attending the centre (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2001; Bell, 1999).

However, the sampling strategy also incorporated a mix of dimensional and snowball sampling (Robson, 2002) to maximise variations between participants 'whose main credential… [was]…experiential relevance' (Rudestam and Newton, 2001, p. 93; Patton, 1990). In this case setting, I interpreted experiential relevance to mean that participants had experience of attending this setting, on at least one night per week, and had attended for at least three months. This included people who attended every night and others who attended less frequently.

I also introduced participant variation as often as possible by seeking to recruit young people who were likely to have differing views and experiences of learning about equality in youth work. I did this by talking with young people who were from different style or age groupings and those who had a history of participating in the setting, or some who had started using the facility more recently. The purpose of this variation was to add to the range of perspectives and experiences. On seeking to vary the research sample, Seale has argued for participants who 'have characteristics that are likely to help in developing an

emerging theory' (Seale, 1998). Thus, I enlisted the help of two youth workers who knew the characteristics I was looking for in terms of age, gender or style type, but who also knew the young people better so could introduce me to people who, for example were homeless or had learning difficulties.

The initial briefing meeting helped me to identify people whose experiences were varied. This meant that I informed participants about the study but also explained that I was looking for a mix of people in terms of ability, gender, age and experience of the setting. I asked them to confirm that they had been involved in youth work for at least three months and suggested that they should only agree to participate in the study if they felt comfortable about my asking them questions about their perspectives and experiences.

This meant that sometimes I briefed three or four young people from the same friendship or style grouping, yet I selected only one for participation in the study, depending on their age, style grouping or period of involvement. Participants were informed that the names of those who agreed to take part, yet who shared the same criteria, would be selected by drawing lots but I never needed to take this action.

The age range of 16-19 years was the same as chosen for the pilot, to include people who were either in full-time education or were working or unemployed, and might be living with parents or independently. I chose this age group because they were more likely to have experienced equality or inequality, and also to have participated in youth work learning processes, than a younger age grouping whose experiences might be limited or whose participation in youth work might be limited to participation in social and leisure activities. Thus, this age grouping would stand a better chance of meeting the criteria of experiential relevance. Choosing this age group also meant that individuals gave their consent but limited differentiation by age.

In the pilot I selected people largely on their availability, but for the main study I wanted to gain understanding of what young people learned about equality by including a breadth of perspectives and exploring their experiences

in depth. To an extent participant selection was purposeful in identifying an experientially relevant sample with varied perspectives and experiences. Yet, as the study developed participants stopped attending or moved away which diminished the range of participants to a more opportunistic sample.

4.3.2 Participant Information

Fieldwork took 30 months to complete, including the pilot study and two phases of data collection. The first phase included additional variation between young people who were casual facility users and participated in leisure activity such as sport or arts, and young people who participated regularly (at least two nights each week) and were involved in a range of educational youth work activity that included group work, youth participation and project work. Phase Two focussed on those who were long-term and regular participants, which was partly due to a focus on youth work, and partly due to their availability.

All of the participants listed in the following table completed Phase I. Those marked ** remained until the end of the study. All of the young people lived in the same town but were drawn from different areas. The young people identified the terms skater and goth to depict peer style groupings. The term ‘ned’ was used by young people in this setting to describe young people of a particular style grouping. This term is used in popular discourse in the UK as a demeaning description of young people who routinely wear track suits and sports shoes and hang around the streets. The term ‘tracker’ was used by Shildrick (2000) to denote the same style grouping and this seemed more appropriate to me than using the more pejorative ‘ned’ term.

The term ‘normal’ was used in interviews by seven of the young people to describe their own style grouping or to differentiate themselves from other groups of young people (such as Goths or skaters). This term was also used by young people in categorising dress-style and cultural group and therefore, drew on their perceptions and descriptions of themselves. Interestingly, I discovered this term was also used by young people in a study of youth culture and social class in the East of Scotland and North East of England (McCulloch

et al., 2006) when asked to describe their cultural style. Thus, I used the term normal to describe young people who tended to wear jeans and T-shirts or other casual trousers and who were not obviously part of a more identifiable group (such as Goths or skaters). The 17 young people who participated were:

Name	**Age at start of research**	**Gender**	**Peer style grouping**
Alan	19	Male	Skater/Goth
Alex **	16	Male	Normal
Ali	18	Female	Goth
Brian	19	Male	Skater
Carol **	18	Female	Normal
Craig **	16	Male	Tracker/Normal
Derek	16	Male	Skater
Elaine	19	Female	Normal
Fiona	17	Female	Normal
Joe	16	Male	Tracker
Jamie	17	Male	Tracker/Normal
Mags	16	Female	Tracker/Normal
Nik	16	Male	Skater
Paula **	16	Female	Tracker
Ryan **	16	Male	Normal
Sandra **	16	Female	Normal/Tracker
Sam **	17	Female	Normal

Table (iv)
Participant characteristics

This table includes participant characteristics, in terms of age and gender. All names have been changed to protect anonymity. The table shows that some young people identified with a specific grouping, while others listed two. The tracker/normal combination was suggested by young people who identified as normal but who said they might be called ‘neds’ by other young people.

Despite my attempt to include participant variation, they were all white and approximately the same age, which was representative of those who attended the setting but they did belong to different cultural or lifestyle groupings.

4.3.3 Dealing with rates of attrition in youth work

The voluntary and seasonal nature of participation in youth work meant that there was a possibility of losing participants who moved away from the setting. I estimated that if I started with 10 participants this would reduce to no fewer than five over the duration of the study. I anticipated that the number of young people would reduce for two reasons. First, they would opt out or move on from the setting and then, in the second phase, I would select a smaller number of participants whose experiences were diverse and directly relevant to the study topic. The voluntary nature of participation in youth work might also have impacted on whether young people remained involved or not.

Thus, in the early stages of the study, the opportunistic nature of young people's availability meant that when someone did not turn up as arranged, I sometimes interviewed an alternative young person so long as they met criteria of age, sex and style group. When this first happened I had to ask the facility to print out my information sheet and consent form, which I had with me on a memory stick. Thereafter, I always brought spare consent forms and information sheets with me so that I could take up those opportunities if needed. I recruited seven young people in this way, thus constituting an opportunity sample.

Consequently, my initial estimates were modified. I met 56 people for an initial briefing and 26 were given information sheets and invited to follow-up briefing meetings. Follow-up meetings were attended by 24 young people and 17 were selected to participate on the basis of the pre-set criteria. Of those 17, a group of seven remained until the fieldwork ended.

Participants were therefore selected on the basis of my judgements about their capacity to share experiences. These judgements were reached following

initial briefings, when I chatted informally with young people about their participation in youth work. I used these conversations to help identify individual capacity to talk about things that they were familiar with and to make sure that all participants were able to share their experiences and demonstrated some capacity to communicate their ideas and share opinions.

This did not mean that I set a level of communication skills, or that selection was based on capacity to talk at length about the research topic. However, given the study's focus on young people's perspectives and experiences, it was important to know that those involved were, to a greater or lesser extent, able to participate in, and share experiences and to communicate their ideas, rather than just agree with anything I, or someone else in the setting, said.

Of the 56 people I met for initial briefing, only three were excluded by me on the basis of my judgements and none of these were because of lack of capacity to give an opinion. Two showed no interests in the study and despite my trying to engage them in conversation, they persisted in ignoring me (and other young people in their group), which suggested they did not want to contribute and kept looking around to see who else was in the facility. So although they took an information sheet, I did not approach them later to participate. One was excluded because although he appeared happy enough to be briefed, he simply nodded in agreement and said nothing during fifteen minutes of briefing when his two friends were chatting in some detail about why they attended the setting. I said to him that I felt he was not interested and he agreed.

4.3.4 On being both insider and outsider in the setting

In an ethnographic study of goth youth culture Hodkinson (2005) discussed how his position as insider contributed to understanding of the goth scene. Hodkinson reported how, at the age of 16 he joined the goth scene, which he described as a distinctive youth culture that was, 'identifiable via the dark, sinister appearance of its young participants and the sombre tones of their preferred music' (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 135).

As a researcher who was also a goth, Hodkinson suggested that having insider knowledge and understanding of the cultural grouping being studied helped him to communicate with research participants because of ‘significant levels of initial proximity between researcher and researched’ (2005, p. 132). Hodkinson characterised his position as one of ‘cultural competence’ (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 138). This position of cultural competence enabled him to tune into settings and to judge what might be of interest in a study of goth culture.

The importance of cultural competence was also noted by Mertens (2005) in researching the lives of minority groups, where cultural understanding and sensitivity were important within the transformative theoretical frame.

The concept of cultural competence interested me because with 23 years of practice experience in youth work, I could draw on a set of competences. Having an insider’s perspective meant that, during both the pilot and main study, I was comfortable in the setting and could quickly gain a sense of what was happening. However, I was also an outsider, no longer employed as a youth worker, and as part of the academic research community, was outside of the day-to-day practice and policy environment.

Thus, being insider and outsider, youth worker and researcher, was a complex set of roles to maintain and it took me well into the main study before I could balance these roles and skills comfortably and competently. For example, as an insider, I could make judgments and interpretations of what happened but needed to be mindful of the changing nature of youth work and how participants would view me differently to youth workers in the setting.

This alerted me to the danger of what I called insider complacency, where I might assume knowledge and understanding of the setting, rather than seeing or interpreting what was actually present or reported to me through a more critical lens. Reflecting on being both an insider and outsider in the setting, I was also reminded throughout the main study that changes in youth work practice meant that some aspects of the setting would be unfamiliar to me.

For example, this happened towards the end of the study, when the links between youth work and the newly introduced Curriculum for Excellence, were being developed (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010; 2010a). Similarly, when experienced as an outsider, something familiar could be viewed differently. For example, the youth council from an outsider perspective could be seen in a different light to the perspective of a youth worker engaged in the process of facilitating youth voice.

4.3.5 On building rapport and trust

I have included this section on building rapport and trust because these were integral to establishing my role as an ethical researcher who could be trusted to respond ethically to potentially sensitive information. Hodkinson (2005) helped me to see how an insider perspective could facilitate my integration into the setting, by using youth work skills interchangeably with research skills, whenever I attended the setting. Specifically, this meant that during interviews and at other times, I used skills that youth workers or others working with young people might use to engage with young people. I created rapport and built relationships with the young people by taking an interest in them, sitting with them in the café or activity room, engaging in conversations during a game of pool and by using humour and active listening skills to connect with them. I did this for between 10 and 30 minutes during every visit I made to the facility, in addition to the time spent in interviews.

Initially, because I did not know the young people, conversation was limited to the research topic and the pragmatic considerations of interviews. I asked open-ended questions from a prepared list and the young people responded with short one-or two-sentence answers. Silences were awkward and slightly uncomfortable. However, as we got to know each other better and were more relaxed in each other's company it was possible to create rapport which helped to foster a friendly and trusting relationship where, according to Glesne (1989) there is mutual understanding and respect but not necessarily liking each other.

In this study, I developed rapport through conversations about the study and a variety of unrelated topics in the café area. By sharing a laugh or being

interested and giving something of myself and my own life, the young people began to include me more in their conversations, to say hello when I arrived and cheerio when I left. I felt that these café conversations, led by the young people and their interests, helped me to build trust with the young people, especially when they began to tell me things that they had previously omitted from our conversations, for example about their friends or partners. This was made easy by the informality of the social spaces in the setting although still took some time to develop as people often held back in conversations the first few times we met.

This was consistent with youth work practice, where informal conversations in groups or with individuals, and often around a specific activity or issue, have been found to facilitate dialogue (Spence, Devanney and Noonan, 2006).

To help create rapport I decided that I should vary what I did when I went to the setting. This could include playing pool, hanging around the café, listening to a band rehearsal, or conducting interviews or structured observations. In addition to conducting interviews and observations involving specific young people, I felt it would also be useful to use my existing youth work skills to engaging young people in informal conversation and to build rapport with young people in the setting.

At first I worried about engaging with people who were not directly involved in the study, but I decided that because they were part of the setting, I could find out more about the setting by talking to them. Thus, such informal and chance encounters could contribute to my understanding of what happened there. This would help to increase my knowledge and understanding of young people's experiences and to get to know the facility and its staff.

4.3.6 Outline of data collected

I made 42 visits to the youth work setting to gather data. I made a further five visits to either brief youth workers, meet them informally about projects or programmes and to collect secondary sources of information. At the end of the final fieldwork phase, I made a final visit to thank everyone concerned and to

share a meal with young people and youth workers who were involved or had helped me at various times during data collection.

Themes were generated through inductive thematic analysis of 24 interview transcripts and 49 observation schedules. As noted earlier, there were 17 people involved in interviews during Phase I and of these seven also participated in a second interview during Phase II. Interviews lasted between 30-90 minutes, giving an approximate total time of 23.5 hours in interviews.

In addition to time spent in interviews, I attended the setting for over 80 hours to observe the youth work environment and young people in it. This included, 49 recorded observations comprising general settings (30 x 20 minutes = 10hours), individual young people (28 x 30 mins = 14hours) and specific settings (5 x 60 mins = 5 hours). This gave a total of 29 hours in recorded observations which, when taken from the total of 80 hours spent in the setting, left 51 remaining hours.

Although not formally recorded this additional time helped me to gain, 'experiential authority…[that]… is based on a "feel" for the foreign context, a kind of accumulated savvy and a sense of the style of a people or place' Clifford (1988, p. 35). The volume of raw data gathered through recorded observation was approximately 30,000 words and in interview transcripts 54,000 words. I reduced this data to a manageable form through coding items as detailed earlier, which enabled me to produce findings. Having identified the methodologies, methods and ethical matters, I needed a theoretical framework through which to develop my thesis. The following section shows how I found the framework for this study.

4.4 Finding a theoretical framework

This study sought to understand young people's perspectives and experiences of equality in youth work. The literature review had shown that the equality of condition framework was used in community based studies and this directed

me to think about how equality of condition as proposed by Baker et al. (2004) might be used to examine young people's experiences and perceptions of equality, and to discuss the extent to which their proposed dimensions of equality were present in one youth work setting.

Debate on the nature and purpose of youth work together with ideas contained within Davies' manifesto (Davies, 2005), also created a focus on youth work and offered criteria on which to base discussion of findings. These ideas combined with the analytical framework provided by Boyatzis (1998) to help me process data.

However, I also needed a theoretical framework that could incorporate both equality and youth work interests and so provide a lens through which to develop examination of the research questions (Cresswell, 2003; Silverman, 2005). This section describes how I created a theoretical framework for this: first, it outlines Mertens' (2005) transformative paradigm and the stages in my adaptation of it; second, it offers a visualisation of my adaptation of Mertens' paradigm as the underpinning theoretical framework for this study. Finally, the section discusses the implications of using this framework.

4.4.1 Introducing Mertens' transformative framework

In seeking social transformation, Mertens (2005) argues that the views of marginalised social groups should be articulated in research. She suggested that research about equality has tended to take a deficit perspective by examining aspects of individuals' lives where race, ethnicity, gender, ability or other circumstances, have positioned people as marginalised.

Mertens (2005) also noticed that research tended to focus on people's experiences of inequality and their lack of power, or their incapacity to behave in particular ways or to achieve particular positions. However, she argued that a recent turn in thinking had shifted the research position to a more positive view that 'has led to reframing research questions to focus on strengths' (Mertens, 2005, p. 106). This shift in perspective is consistent with a shift from

a deficit view of young people to one that is found in generic youth work. Instead of focusing on negative aspects of their lives, Mertens' perspective added to the case for examining young people's perceptions and experiences of equality rather than their experiences of inequality.

Thus, it was important to seek young people's perspectives, in order to bring their views into focus instead of practitioners' or policy makers'. This was in keeping with youth work theory and practice, which, as shown in the literature review, puts young people at the centre of the process.

Mertens' theory emerged from considerations of cultural competency and differences in achievement, inside and outside of schooling (Mertens, 2005). The transformative research paradigm was developed in response to a lack of representation of marginalised people in research literature. By seeking to examine young people's perspectives and taking a positive stance this study aimed to inform youth work practices, challenge the marginalisation of young people, and contribute to discourses about equality and youth work.

In light of this, the following characteristics were derived from Mertens' characteristics for transformative research and adapted for this study:

1. The research places central importance on the lives and experiences of groups that have traditionally been marginalised.

2. The research analyses how and why inequalities exist and are reflected in asymmetric power relationships.

3. The research examines how the results of social enquiry on equality are linked to political and social action.

4. The research uses transformative theories to develop the research approach and to develop a theoretical framework.

Adapted from Mertens (2005, p. 23)

Mertens' first characteristic includes a requirement to examine 'strategies that oppressed groups use to resist challenge and subvert' (p.23). However, while the literature review suggested equality as an underpinning value base in youth work, there was no empirical evidence of how such strategies were developed in youth work and so it was not possible to keep this characteristic in its entirety for this setting. The original characteristic was therefore adapted to reflect the importance of researching young people's experiences as a social group who are, according to the literature, marginalised by age but where evidence of specific strategies for resistance, subversion or challenges to their oppression, were neither overt nor subject to detailed analysis.

The second characteristic is as Mertens originally stated but because this study examined the experiences of young people, it does not list specific inequalities that were noted in the original, such as gender, race or ethnicity.

The third characteristic is unchanged from Mertens' original.

The fourth characteristic was adapted from a requirement that a transformative theory should be used to accommodate more than one such theory to respond to the two distinct research interests in this case study. Further, I used what Mertens called a 'program theory' (Mertens, 2005, p. 23) or set of beliefs that underpinned the research problem and could be used to create a theoretical framework for this study, which is explained in the next section.

These four characteristics, with the above amendments, were important elements of this study: focusing on young people as a marginalised social group; analysing the topic of equality and the power relationships inherent in one youth work setting; generating findings that may be used to inspire or underpin political social action; using transformative theories to develop the study.

Mertens (2005) argues that this research paradigm should be applied in conjunction with other transformative theories. While Boyatzis (1998) provided an analytical framework that I used to guide and transform raw data into themes, I also needed to identify a theoretical framework in order to take

forward analysis of findings. Mertens' framework also offered a good fit with the constructo-interpretive epistemology through which knowledge claims would be made in this study.

The theories examined in the literature review about equality of condition and a youth work manifesto (Baker, et al., 2004; Davies, 2005) were explicit in calling for transformation as part of a wider agenda for social change and so I considered these as appropriate transformative theories to use as the underpinning programme theory in this study.

Taken together, these elements (TAF, Equality of Condition, Manifesto for Youth Work and Constructo-interpretive Epistemology) made up the research framework for this study. This framework was not set in advance. Rather, it was developed as the study evolved by drawing on the findings of the pilot study and through ongoing examination of research literature. This process was developed over four stages that are discussed in the next section.

4.4.2 Stages in adapting Mertens' framework for use in research about youth work

Mertens suggests that a theoretical framework should be regarded as a 'conceptual template with which to compare and contrast results' (Mertens, 2005, p. 107). I felt that this offered a kind of conceptual blanket that wrapped together the two concepts of youth work and equality. I developed the theoretical framework for this study in four stages:

Stage	**Process**
Stage I	Identification of research topic, research problem and core research interests.
Stage II	Consideration of fit between the core research interests and Mertens' transformative paradigm.
Stage III	Examination of fit between transformative theories used in this study.
Stage IV	Production of an outline of the theoretical framework used in this study.

Table (v)
Stages in Development of a Theoretical Framework

Stage I was developed during the pilot study and in examination of literature, where a research gap was identified and the rationale for this study outlined. Stage II was developed by considering how the core interests could be examined using Mertens' framework. Comparing the theoretical positions taken for each core research interests, I identified a fit with Mertens' transformative paradigm. This table shows my interpretation of commonality across core interests, theoretical positions and transformative theory:

Core Research Interests	Theoretical Position taken from Literature Review	Fit with Mertens' Transformative Theory (Mertens, 2005)
Young People's perceptions and experiences of equality and whether there is evidence of equality as a value base in youth work **(Young People and Equality)**	Young people are seen as a threat, are marginalised and are subject to age-based (and other forms of) discrimination (Giroux, 2005; Batsleer, 2008; Taylor,2010). Equality of condition requires changes in social structures for people to take responsible and autonomous decisions as individuals and in social groups (Baker et al., 2004). Citizenship, rights based and opportunity driven forms of equality serving an egalitarian purpose that contributes to addressing social inequality (Shaw and McCulloch, 2009)	Places importance on the lives and experiences of a marginalised group. Analyses how young people are discriminated against. Examines equality and produces findings that could be used to address social inequality. Disseminates analysis in conference papers practitioner forums and academic journals to encourage personal and social action for change.
Young people's views about how they learned about equality in youth work **(Young people and Youth Work)**	Youth work facilitates the personal and social development of young people through informal education (Jeffs and Smith, 2010). Transformative educational youth work is reflective and practiced as freedom, it tips the balance of power in young people's favour (Batsleer, 2008; Davies, 2005).	Examine young people's experiences of youth work that promotes personal and social action. The position of the researcher is clear Critically reflective.Examines how equality is reflected in power relations.

Table (vi)
Commonality in research interests, theory and transformative paradigm

Having established this fit with core research interests, Stage III involved consideration of whether the proposed transformative theories were also a good fit with Mertens' paradigm. Repeated reading of literature helped me to incorporate the transformative theories proposed by Baker et al. (2004) and Davies (2005) within Mertens' theoretical framework.

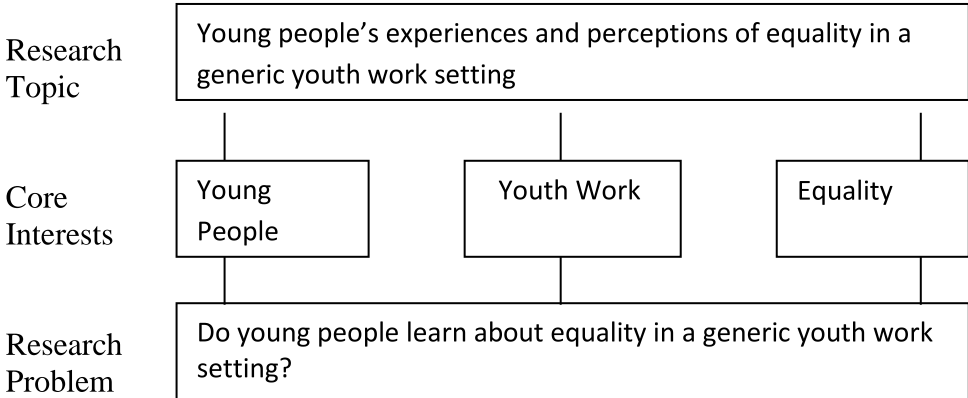
I devised the following table to help me identify potentially similar or overlapping theoretical interests that might usefully be combined to discuss findings. While the table does not show a specific link between the two, it help me to see how these might be connected across the two different sets of ideas.

Dimensions of Equality (Baker et al., 2004)	**Characteristics of youth work (Davies, 2005)**
Respect and Recognition celebrates diversity and promotes intercultural, critical dialogue across different social groups.	**Starts with and values young people** as individuals, and as part of the wider community, sharing diverse cultural identities.
Financial **Resources** are key but social and cultural capital, access to public services and prospects for a good life are important too.	**Works with young people on their own territory**, in comfortable spaces where they can **connect or socialise and network** with friends.
Love, Care and Solidarity includes capacity for intimacy, caring and supportive relationships.	**Values and respects peer relationships**; spaces for relaxation and fun.
Power relations are strengthened by participatory politics and challenges to power in other areas.	**Tips the balance of power** in young people's favour; principle that **young people choose to participate voluntarily.**
Working and Learning burdens and benefits are more equally distributed combined with the intrinsic value of self-development facilitates real life choices.	Engages young people in social, educational and creative responses to the world; **breaks cycles of boredom** and **offers new and challenging activities**.

Table (vii)
Alignment between Dimensions of Equality and Characteristics of Youth Work

I produced this table by repeated reading of the dimensions of equality that were located at the heart of equality of condition (Baker et al., 2004) and the characteristics that underpinned a manifesto for youth work (Davies, 2005). Aligning these together created a new theoretical perspective, through which to analyse young people's experiences of equality in youth work.

Transformative Theoretical Framework for examining young people's experiences and perceptions of equality in a generic youth work setting



TRANSFORMATIVE THEORIES used in this study

Thematic Analysis Framework (Boyatzis, 1998)
This framework provides a systematic way of transforming qualitative information to identify themes from the data provided by the young people involved in this study.

Equality of Condition (Baker et al., 2004)
Five dimensions of equality are outlined that may be applied to marginalised social groups. This framework encourages thinking about equality that promotes the explicit goal of social and cultural transformation.

Manifesto for Youth Work (Davies, 2005)
A configuration of seven elements of youth work practice that distinguishes this form of intervention. The manifesto is proposed as a means of extending the possibilities for educational youth work that makes a contribution to social justice.

Thematic Code applied in this study:
- Aspects of Difference
- Being and Becoming
- Structural Influences
- Thinking and Theorizing
- Well-Being
- Youth Culture
- Youth Work Elements

Dimensions of Equality:
- Respect and recognition
- Equality of resources
- Love, Care and Solidarity
- Equality of Power
- Working and Learning

Characteristics for Youth Work:
- Voluntary participation
- Tipping balance of power
- Relaxation and fun
- Challenging experiences
- Young people as they are
- On young people's terms and on their territory
- Respects peer networks

Consideration of how these elements inform understanding of young people's experiences and perceptions of equality in a generic youth work setting

Fig. (i) Transformative theoretical framework for this study

This diagram illustrates how I combined concepts to analyse and examine data. Working from top to bottom, the diagram first shows the research topic, research interests and research problem. Then it identifies three transformative theories that helped me to consider findings: Boyatzis' (1998) work offered an analytical framework for developing a code that could be applied to data to facilitate the development of themes; Baker et al. (2004) offered a framework for discussing findings related to equality; Davies (2005) offered a transformative framework for discussing findings related to youth work. Finally, the diagram shows the key characteristics from each of the transformative theories.

This new perspective created a conceptual bridge between youth work and equality studies, in order to facilitate consideration of the research problem. I developed Stage IV by combining elements of the first three stages to create a transformative theoretical framework.

Proposed as an alternative to forms of research that privileged powerful experts, Mertens (2005) developed the transformative paradigm so that marginalised people could take increased power and control. The paradigm draws on feminist perspectives that aim to reverse inequality and consider power relationships that are embedded in society and which cause discrimination. Thus, the theoretical framework for this study takes a particular stance and is not value free and as such, brings implications to the research process.

4.4.3 Implications of using this framework

This research sought to discover young people's perceptions and experiences of equality in order to understand them. Using this framework meant that, I also intend to use the findings to bring about social change. To do this, in addition to asking young people about their experiences of the setting, I also asked them about the methods used in the pilot and how they felt about taking part in the study. Further, I asked them if they wanted to be involved in dissemination of findings.

As shown earlier in discussion of the pilot study, their responses to questions about methods and participating in this research, guided the design of e-diary methods and informed my selection of research methods for the main study. Three young people said they would be interested in being involved in dissemination of findings. I explained to them that this might be some time in the future and they said that was alright. So, I have retained contact details for those three participants in a secure location and intend to reconnect with them on completion of my thesis in order to see if they are still interested in being involved. If this is the case, I will invite them to present findings jointly to a conference on youth work or in another youth work setting.

Of course, if this happens we will need to be mindful of ethical boundaries and preparatory work will be needed in order to ensure sound ethical practice. However, I believe that a collaborative approach to dissemination of findings would be in keeping with Mertens' transformative framework and should be pursued if possible.

The equality of condition framework had previously been used to consider how community based informal learning could be used in equality and literacy work (Mark, 2007). This suggested that it could also be used to examine how informal community based learning could be used in equality and youth work by showing young people's experiences of equality in a single case setting.

As discussed in the literature review, research conducted by Mark (2007) gathered data from routine practices in literacy work and I envisaged there would be similar opportunities, in the youth work setting, to observe routine youth work activities, instead of deliberately created research encounters. An implication of using this framework was that I would spend as much time as possible in the setting, so that I could judge which practices were recognisable as routine and repeated within the setting.

In addition to spending time observing routine activity in the setting, Rich (2003; 2005) also highlighted the need for devising a method of recording observations that doubled up as an instrument for recording data but could also

be analysed systematically to produce findings. This meant that the observation schedule became both data collection instrument and an artefact that was coded and analysed to produce findings.

Another implication of combining complex ideas in a single framework is that discussion is complicated and cumulative. This meant that I examined discrete areas in specific chapters: chapters five and six examine reasons why young people attended youth work and the value base that was identified as contributing to learning about equality in this specific context; chapter seven shows the young people's experiences and perceptions of equality; chapter eight shows how they appeared to learn about equality in the setting; chapter nine discusses the cumulative effect of these findings across a complex range of theoretical perspectives. Different chapters deal with specific aspects of the theoretical framework until they combine at the end, in chapter ten, to enable conclusions to be drawn from this study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the main study and stages in thematic analysis. It examined my use of open coding to create themes for analysis. Ethical procedures were discussed to ensure that participants would not be harmed by participating in this study. This included an outline of my sampling strategy which accommodated an anticipated reduction in numbers. The chapter also provided information, being an insider and outsider in the setting and the importance of building rapport and trust in developing the research. An outline of the range of data collected suggested a need for a theoretical framework which for this study was underpinned by Mertens' transformative paradigm. The chapter ends with discussion of the implications of using Mertens' framework.

PART THREE: FINDINGS

5 Reasons why young people engage in one youth work setting

Chapter Outline

As the starting point for analysis, this chapter responds to research question one: Why do young people attend this youth work setting? (Objective a) The chapter identifies what young people did when they engaged in youth work. It provides information on why they attended and the reasons, according to young people in this study, for engaging in youth work. The chapter draws on my observations and young people's views to suggest that youth work contributed to enhancing their sense of social, emotional and cultural well-being.

As suggested in the literature review, in thinking about how to measure the effectiveness of specific activity, the logic model offers a way of describing what has happened in order to communicate expectations about what impact a particular activity might bring in the future (McCawley, 2010; Scottish Government, 2009). The logic model suggests that if short-term outcomes are achieved, intermediate and then long-term impacts will follow.

Throughout this study the logic model was helpful in narrating the kind of learning that might be assumed or inferred from my interpretation of the young people's perceptions and experiences, and my observations of them. By showing their micro-level experiences in this single case setting, I could make logical assumptions about future impacts from this research.

The logic model was therefore helpful in all of the discussion chapters (five to nine) as it enabled me to draw conclusions from this single case study which could be used to inform understanding of the contribution of youth work across a range of contexts which could inform future youth work developments in policy and practice.

5.1 *What young people do when they engage in youth work*

5.1.1 An outline of the Youth Work setting

As previously introduced, the setting for this research was a purpose built youth facility in a town in west-central Scotland. Youth work was mainly focussed on young people aged 12-18 years. However for specialist programmes and some group work, young people who were older or slightly younger also participated. The building incorporated a large games hall, a café area and three group work rooms. The facility housed an internet/computing room, an arts studio and rehearsal space. It was open six days (Mon-Sat), and five nights a week (Mon-Fri) and was home to a range of daytime and evening groups, an after-school club and programmes for young unemployed. For this study, I attended on Monday and Wednesday evenings which were open drop-in nights, and I made five daytime visits to meet staff or young people.

The youth work team comprised seven full time and 15 part-time or voluntary youth workers. Core funding was provided by the local authority and costs for activities and room or equipment hire were kept to a minimum, in order to facilitate access. Additional funding was sourced from national and local charities and grant giving organisations and young people's own fund raising.

The facility was situated close to a busy shopping centre with a cinema and variety of other social amenities, such as pubs and night clubs, nearby. The town had a number of good sports facilities including a swimming pool and competition standard athletic track. Thus, the town was regarded as successful and showed few signs of deprivation. The area was well served by public transport. This did not mean that the young people who attended were untouched by the impacts of poverty and discrimination through individual circumstances, yet neither could it be claimed that they lived in an area that experienced multiple-deprivation. The town had a population of approximately 85,000 people and enjoyed a history of good levels of employment, housing and infrastructure.

5.1.2 *Insights from observations of the young people in this setting*

I collected data using observation over a two-year period. My analysis suggested there were two kinds of generic youth work activity in this setting. The first kind of activity included a variety of informal provision that was open, available and accessible to all. I describe this as open access activity. The second kind of activity happened in specific projects that were identified as social, educational and self-directed groups (Preston-Shoot, 2007). In this setting, I describe this as specialist or project based activity. Both kinds of activity were generic in their openness, accessibility and purpose and in keeping with the definition of generic youth work for this study.

Open access activity that I observed during every time I visited the setting included:

- Team sports in a large games hall;
- Informal café environment including television, comfortable seating, selection of confectionary, soft drinks etc.;
- Social activities on offer in the café, including pool, guitar hero and live bands;
- Social education in the café, including conversations with youth workers and problem posing education, about personal development, relationships, employment, studying and any aspect of their lives;
- Band or music and DJ rehearsals;
- Computing.

These activities were regularly available, on one or more nights, every week. All young people in this study engaged in at least two of these (usually café, plus one other) and 16 did more than two. Open access activity that was not observed on every visit but routinely available and talked about included:

- Trips and visits (especially, but not exclusively, during school holiday programme);
- Arts and craft work.

Specialist or Project based activity included:

- Disability Sports Group (DSG)

  A group that was established as part of the Federation of Disability Sports, to support, encourage and integrate young people, whose abilities are diverse, so that they can participate and achieve their potential in sport.
- Drama Group

  A performing and creative arts group that engaged in both light-hearted and serious drama-based education or docu-drama projects.
- International Exchange Group

  A reciprocal arrangement where groups of young people from different countries host and visit each other, not as tourists but to share experiences of their social and cultural lives.
- Music Project

  A group that co-ordinated musical interests including, live bands, recording and rehearsal opportunities and DJing.
- World Issues Group

  A group in the youth work setting that sought to engage young people in fund raising and learning, in order to raise awareness and take action to alleviate poverty in other countries.
- Young Carers Group

  A group that engages and supports young people who have an unpaid caring role, or who take responsibility for another person who is usually a family member.
- Youth Council

  A forum for young people to come together in order to consult, discuss and take decisions on matters affecting their lives.

These activities were available less frequently, usually weekly or monthly. They involved young people who perceived themselves as members of the specific group or project. There appeared to be two types of group: first, the young carers and disability sports were targeted groups, which meant the

participants were referred or recruited to attend. However, there was no requirement to attend and so participation remained voluntary, in that young people decided whether to attend or not.

The DSG was different from the young carers because, in addition those who were targeted or invited to participate, other young people were also involved and DSG members participated in the wider facility programme. Thus, the DSG was an integral part of the open access programme, while the young carer's group was a closed group, where access was limited to young people with a caring role.

The second type of group or project in this setting did not require participants to be identified or targeted in any way. These were open to anyone but development appeared to be influenced by the formation of cohesive bonds that the young people involved formed with each other and the group's distinctive purpose. This meant that, despite being open and accessible to all, it was sometimes difficult for non-members to join. There could be two reasons for this.

First, groupwork theory (Doel, 2006; Douglas, 2000) would suggest that as they formed a bond over time, the young people involved shared experiences and created histories that meant they could function better together, but to an extent, could also exclude young people who had not shared those experiences as part of the group.

Second, the nature or purpose of the group sometimes made it difficult for others to join at a later stage. For example, when the youth exchange was imminent or the drama group was working towards a specific performance and roles had been cast it might be difficult for new group members to join.

This is consistent with groupwork theory and practice (Douglas, 2000; Jacques, 2000; Doel, 2006) which suggest that groups take on specific characteristics:

- Group members interact with each other over time
- Members perceive themselves to be part of the group
- The group develops a set of shared goals and purpose
- There are norms, roles and expectations associated with the group
- Relationships develop and change over time
- Participants impact on each other
- Participants share a sense of unity and solidarity.

Adapted from Jacques (2000)

In taking on these characteristics, group development could lead to the exclusion of non-group members. However, it was clear from my observations that workers did everything possible to prevent this kind of exclusion from happening by inviting young people to join, or asking group members how they could avoid forming a ‘clique’ and so welcome new people.

Taking these findings together, it appeared that generic youth work, in this setting, offered young people a variety of activities that were open to all and sometimes specific or project based. Young people could walk in from the street and join in, without needing to ‘join’ a club or prove who they were. They also hung around the café, meeting and making friends and talking with youth workers.

There were also groups that were less open, and formed around a project or issue. Groups and projects enabled young people to pursue special interests and to engage in longer term projects. Some of these groups could be described as closed, in the sense that young people accessed them via referral from youth services, social work or other formalised routes. Having described the findings from my observations of the setting as a whole, I needed to consider what young people said about their reasons for attendance.

5.2 What young people said about why they engaged in youth work

This section explains why young people attended youth work, as it was important to establish their reasons for attending in order to understand whether coming to youth work might impact on their perceptions and experiences of equality. Examining the nature of their participation in a generic setting helped to contextualise and sharpen the focus of this study by describing how the starting point for some of the young people was changed by the end of the fieldwork phase.

5.2.1 Information the young people provided about why, when and how often they attended youth work

Of the 17 young people interviewed as part of this study, 14 said they attended regularly between three and four times each week, two attended on one night each week, and one attended less than once a week. The following responses were typical of all young people in this study when answering questions about why and how often they attended:

> Three, maybe four times a week, it gives me something to do.
>
> Mags

> Monday, Wednesday and Friday…just for a laugh…[with friends].
>
> Craig

> Well, it used to be four times a week but now it's less…as I got older, I've started going out more [to pubs] so now I only come up when people have asked me to…like about three or four times a month…to see my friends and play computers.
>
> Alan

> I am up about three or four times a week… there are just so many things to do – the sports hall, visits to places and the different groups…it's all good and you have a good time with your friends.
>
> Carol

These responses suggested that the young people in this study attended youth work to meet friends and take part in activities. Those who attended on one night each week were limited in their choice of activities, depending on what was available on that night. Those who only attended on one night were part of the Disability Sports Group (DSG). Yet, while this remained the focus of their involvement, they also participated in a range of available activities.

Fiona attended once a week for a specific purpose, to participate in the DSG:

> I come here to get out…[of the house]…and see my friends…I only come on a Monday…it's convenient for me.
>
> Elaine

> I come here because my friends are here…I come up on a Monday, because that's when they come up.
>
> Fiona

Elaine and Fiona only attended when the DSG was on. However Sam, who was also in the DSG, attended on other nights too:

> I don't know why I come up really... it's just meeting different people… just having a laugh…I play pool all the time.
>
> Sam

Sam's response suggested that, in addition to the DSG, coming to youth work was about doing things and meeting people, having a laugh and it included making friends from outside of the DSG. I also observed Sam playing pool and interacting with peers and youth workers:

> Sam was playing pool with [someone from outside of the DSG] again…she engages with people from beyond her immediate group. I observed her at the pool table, then in the café, then at the 'guitar hero' [video game] and down at football…in each setting she connected with people from inside and outside the group…she appears confident talking to anyone, young people or staff, she is happy to challenge anyone to a game of pool or whatever…

Unusually, Derek gave a different response:

> Er, well, I come here every single day it's open, so Monday, Wednesday and Friday….Mostly because it usually rains here and there's nowhere else to go.

Although this response suggested that Derek was a regular participant in youth work, his comment suggested that despite being situated in a large town with many public and social amenities, he saw this as the only venue that suited his needs as a young person who wanted to hang out with friends. For Derek, these feelings were particularly acute, when it rained.

This reference to the weather was important. As a skateboarder, Derek spent most of his free time, weather permitting, on the streets or at a skate park. Thus, attending the youth work setting was not his first-choice activity. This was similar for Nik who suggested attendance was seasonal:

> I don't really come in so much 'cause I'm into skate-boarding…it's the skating season so I'm out there more...at the skate-boarding.
>
> Nik

In contrast Jack, who attended regularly, was aware of other things to do:

> Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays…I go to the skate park or up here…maybe a couple of times a month I go to the cinema and once in a while I go swimming…There's quite a lot of things to do and places for people to meet…like the youth project, skate park, swimming,

> cinema and even down the town centre in general…just to socialise and meet people… these are the main areas where you meet other young people.
>
> Jack

Jack highlighted a range of possibilities for meeting up with friends. Yet, he also said that he attended youth work or the adjacent skate park on three nights each week, suggesting this as a more regular location than other amenities. In responding to questions about why and how often he attended, Jack talked about meeting up with friends and socialising.

Taken together, these responses suggest that reasons why young people attended youth work were diverse and often involved a number of reasons, for example, meeting friends and having fun or doing sports and getting out of the house. Their reasons for engaging in youth work ranged from convenience to specific interest, and included participation in various programmes. Factors that influenced their attendance included specific interests and whether an activity was available, for example, the DSG was on Mondays.

This was in keeping with Davies' (2005) requirement for youth work to provide relaxation and fun and for Jeffs and Smiths' (2010) assertions about friendship and association in youth work. Yet, the extent to which these activities meet Davies' requirement for challenging or stimulating activity, or Jeffs and Smith's assertions about association and informal education, needed further analysis, in order to gain depth of understanding and to allay concerns that youth work might be regarded as nothing more than leisure activity (Banks, 2010).

Given the range of interests and activities in the setting, I decided it would be useful to examine one young person's reasons for engaging in youth work in detail, in order to reach a deeper understanding of any complex or intersecting interests. The information provided by Ryan was examined in detail.

5.2.2 Interpreting Ryan's reasons for engaging in youth work

This section is shaped by the ethnographic focus of this study in seeking to drill down and provide a 'thick description' of one aspect of the case setting, in this instance the experiences of one young man called Ryan. I decided to examine Ryan's experiences in detail because, initially, he took a typical view of attending as 'something to do' but over time, became involved as a youth councillor and volunteer leader.

Thus, examining a range of Ryan's experiences could shed light on the complexity of reasons why he attended youth work. I chose specific quotes from Ryan that combined to show the complexity of reasons for his attendance, and the apparent change he underwent, during his time in youth work. When I first asked him, during the early stages of fieldwork, about why he attended youth work:

> I thought it would just be like, play games and that would be it…I never thought you could get involved in so many ways, there are so many clubs and you can do Awards…

At this early stage in his participation, Ryan was pleased to discover that, his preconceived ideas about youth work were unfounded, and that there were many possibilities for getting involved in the youth work setting. Just over one year later, Ryan had become a volunteer youth leader and so his experiences, perceptions and reasons for attending changed over time. This helped me to understand how his reasons for engaging in youth work changed:

> I learned more to be myself…through coming here I got more confidence, I learned how to be like me and then found out that people [the workers and other young people] accepted me for that...they made you feel welcome, you could relax and just be yourself…I got more confident through the new friends I met, the clubs I go to and the youth workers…it's everyone.

This extract illustrates how Ryan's perspectives changed as his confidence grew and he became more involved in the setting. Initially, this appeared to be about mixing with other young people but then it became clear that Ryan was also talking about everyone in the setting, the other young people and the youth workers, who also impacted on his experiences in the setting.

It was important to Ryan that others accepted him for being himself which seemed to help him in the formation of an emerging, more confident, image of himself. Yet, affirmation of this emerging self was not only found in his relationships with other young people. It was also affirmed in the clubs he attended and by the youth workers who, alongside young people, made him feel welcome and relaxed. He could be himself and discover who he wanted to become in future.

Ryan suggested that 'everyone' contributed to his learning about himself. This implied that he was able to build relationships that contributed to his developing sense of well-being in relation to an emerging identity. Through a process of personal development and learning, over time, Ryan appeared to develop new understandings of the world. In addition to building confidence, his involvement in the youth council and the democracy group, engaged Ryan in political education:

> We're doing a mock election for young people...it helps you to put your views across in, like, a political way instead of battering the door down...to actually deal with it in a more political way…There's a lot of people say they don't like politics but politics affects us all...so doing things like that…it gives us all good life-skills.

In this extract, Ryan suggested that youth work introduced him, and other young people, to political processes. He implied that running a mock election and engaging in a 'political way' gave him a range of valuable life-skills that he could use to put his point across.

To me these ideas combined to show a complexity of reasons for attending that included participation in activities, the formation of identity and political engagement. A year later, Ryan had consolidated his thinking about the impact of youth work on his personal development:

> I was a youth councillor the last time we met but now I think I've matured a lot since then…I've learned all these things about me and about other people and I think that we all need to be involved to make things happen, or it won't happen…but like new people are shown around, welcomed, talked to and this helps everyone to get on…[but]…we don't all spend all of our time mixing everyone up...it's just how you're made to feel…I got involved in volunteering at the games group because the worker recommended it...so I became a peer educator.

Ryan suggested he became involved as a volunteer 'because the worker recommended it'. This suggested that he held the worker in some regard which meant he trusted their judgement and acted on their recommendation, otherwise he could have ignored their suggestion. Ryan's learning was about new skills and doing things differently, which he claimed transformed his sense of maturity and also provided a set of valued life skills.

This idea of doing things differently was interesting in light of the core research interests on equality in youth work. His learning appeared to include building an understanding of how different people can work together, in co-operation with each other, to take action that, 'helped make things happen'. In this sense, through participating in youth work, Ryan appeared to develop a sense of responsibility for personal and social action, which led to increased involvement and to his new role as a peer educator.

Thus, Ryan believed that he learned through involvement in specific interest groups (including the games group, youth council and democracy group) and that learning was prompted by youth workers, who were welcoming and made suggestions that encouraged learning and personal development.

Ryan's comments implied that something was happening in the youth work setting beyond Davies requirement for challenging activities and people mixing together for fun. Specifically, he suggested that 'it's just how you're made to feel'. Again, it appeared that part of his reason for engaging in youth work were the feelings invoked by the people he met there. Ongoing educational and developmental relationships between youth workers and young people appeared to enhance his feelings of value and worth. This helped Ryan see himself as part of a wider community, beyond peer or friendship group, where everyone, despite individual differences, could 'get on' together.

By taking additional responsibilities, changing his self-perception and learning about taking collective action to make things happen, it appeared that Ryan was engaged in learning about a range of life skills that could enable him to take on new roles. Using the logic model, it could be assumed that these new skills and social roles were not restricted to this youth work setting, but could also be applied to his life outside of the setting. Although, I only met Ryan in the youth work setting, I noted that his demeanour and range of conversation changed over my two years of knowing him. For example, from initial conversations about what he was doing and who he was meeting up with, to later conversations about ideas such as democracy or politics.

Listening to Ryan talk about what he learned through the people he met while attending youth work, and observing these changes over time, helped me to interpret and understand his reasons for attending. This compounded the need to look beyond simple responses to questions about attendance. Thus, I returned to my observations of Ryan's changing level of involvement. In the early stages of the fieldwork I noted:

> Ryan was in tonight…he hung around the café with a group of friends for about 20 mins …then headed to games group…he asked if I wanted to ask him any questions for my study…he is really enthusiastic and always keen to help…

> Ryan arrived at 7.30ish, nodded hello… [youth worker] asked him why he hadn't come to the youth exchange meeting…he called out to say he was busy and headed off to the games group. After about ten minutes I went into the games group. Ryan and three others were not gaming but talking tactics. He asked if I wanted a game but I had arranged to do an interview so that was a missed opportunity… I said couldn't stay and left. I didn't see Ryan again. He stayed in the games group all night.

In each of these extracts, Ryan was focussed on the games group as his main reason for being there. Over a year later, I noted in my observation schedule:

> Talked to Ryan tonight about his work experience week here at the youth facility…it was interesting to hear about his experiences of attending meetings and coming to realise what goes on behind the scenes…we chatted for about ten minutes…then I observed him on and off all night…he seems more like a youth worker than a young person now…still hanging around the cafe, talking to friends doing things around the place…helpful as ever….but now when I see him speaking to staff it's as though he is a worker…I saw him talking with at least three different groups of young people, who were not his friends…I heard him discussing the programme with young people welcoming one group of three girls who hadn't been to the facility before and talking about a meeting with a member of staff.

Comparing these two observations suggests that Ryan's reasons for attendance changed over time, from initial interest in the activity programme to his volunteering role and a changing relationship with youth workers.

In some respects this could be due to the new and challenging activities he participated in (such as the youth council or democracy group). It could also be due to a generally helping disposition or that Ryan had simply grown up. In his second interview, he did say he had 'matured'. However, this alone did not account for changes in his level of involvement in, for example, the democracy group or in becoming a peer educator. There were young people in the setting who also 'matured' alongside Ryan but did not become engaged in the same

way. Most moved away from youth work altogether when they reached eighteen or nineteen.

So, in addition to my identification of his helping disposition, and what Ryan described as the process of growing up, I wondered what other factors might contribute to Ryan's continued participation in this setting:

> I think if this place wasn't here I'd probably be out on the streets, as a lot of people my age are…but em…its just great that I can come here and relax… like…people have arguments at home and can storm out of the house and then come here and let off steam playing football or meeting their friends

This extract from Ryan's first interview suggested that he valued the youth work setting as an alternative to hanging around outside, where he and other young people could relax or let off steam, away from the pressures of either the streets or family relationships.

Again, he was not alone in thinking this but he seemed to take a more reasoned view. When he began talking about himself, he spoke in the first person, saying 'I can come here to relax', but then changed to the third person, as he began to develop a theory about why young people engage in youth work.

During his second interview, when I asked him about his relationship with youth workers, Ryan said:

> I reckon like…you should give respect rather than have to earn it…so if people are treated with equal respect…until someone does something to change that, then everything works better…the workers take our views into account about running the…[youth work setting]…so then we take their views into consideration when they ask us to do things…

Ryan's comments suggested reciprocity in the creation of respectful relationships between young people and youth workers as mutually beneficial in helping relations to work better. For example, the above extract highlights the importance of respect and equal treatment that underpinned the young people's involvement in running the facility. Ryan believed young people's views were influential in the setting, and that they had a real say in what happened there, and in programme development. They worked co-operatively alongside youth workers to raise funds, develop ideas and create new programmes and activities.

When asked how his relationship with youth workers differed from his relationships with other adults he knew, such as teachers or parents, he said:

> They [youth workers] don't 'teach' or tell you what to do...they ask you what you want to do or they ask you to do things…like teachers will say…you WILL learn this or parents will say…right now you MUST tidy your room…but with youth workers it's more of a question, like, do you want to do this or that…let's look at the options…and you decide.

Thus, Ryan's experiences of youth work appeared to be aligned with a kind of critical pedagogy outlined in the literature review, where a problem-posing and conversational pedagogy facilitated his learning, in co-operation and solidarity with youth workers (Batsleer, 2008; Jeffs and Smith, 2010). By asking questions that encouraged him to consider his options, youth workers added value to their existing positive and non-formal relationships with Ryan.

In this sense, a questioning disposition appeared to raise young people's consciousness and created possibilities for them to be empowered, and to take responsibility for their own actions. Rather than rely on pre-determined or fixed solutions, Ryan said that youth workers enabled young people to decide things for themselves. He also suggested that his relationships with youth workers were different to those more authoritarian relationships he experienced with other adults, such as teachers or parents. As he participated in different

groups, made friends, built confidence and became a volunteer, his experiences of youth work appeared to be as much about self-efficacy and identity, as they were about doing leisure activities:

> It teaches you about having choices and it facilitates things for young people…it helps them to do what they want for themselves, rather than doing nothing really.

This idea of making choices also seemed important in Ryan's decision to engage in youth work over a prolonged period. For example, his commentary on coming to youth work confirmed changes, in shifting from the person he used to be, towards the kind of person he wanted to be:

> When I was younger, I was a bit of a bam…I get on well with the workers… it's changed me…I've stopped being a bam and I've straightened out.

This suggested that, since coming to youth work, Ryan believed that he had changed. In his own way, he described a process of transformation from what he perceived as a 'bampot' to 'straightening out'. This suggested he was now on a different trajectory and that his life had changed. Ryan attributed this shift in trajectory to his participation in youth work.

The range of information provided by Ryan suggests that no single element contributed to his reasons for engaging in youth work. Rather, youth work appeared to be a complex process through which he experienced a combination of fun or challenging activity in tandem with a critical approach to pedagogy that contributed to this developing new skills and perspectives and appeared to suggest a number of reasons for attending youth work. These included becoming confident and self-assured, learning about democracy and politics or becoming a peer educator instead of hanging around the streets. In specific relation to the topic of equality Ryan learned about co-operative relationships and mutual respect, which meant he was able to assert his ideas in democratic and political discussions. He suggested that, in part, his engagement in youth work contributed to his personal development.

While youth work, and the people he met there, were not the only influences on Ryan's reasons for attending, the setting and the youth workers appeared to be important to him in offering opportunities to engage in different kinds of activity or groups and projects that enhanced his capacity to learn and experience new things. Thus, Ryan cited multiple reasons for engaging in youth work.

Taking a logical model to thinking about the wider implications of Ryan's experiences and reasons for attending, and when combined with the earlier reasons given by other young people in this study, it could be assumed that there were multiple reasons for engaging in youth work. Thus, having identified multiple reasons for engaging in youth work, I could now consider the nature of youth work as practised in this generic setting.

5.3 The multi-dimensional nature of youth work in the setting

5.3.1 The over-lapping nature of youth work

While identifying reasons why young people participated in youth work, such as participating in activities with friends, having fun and pursuing special interests, it was difficult to isolate single activities or groups, or the extent to which one might be more highly regarded than another. There appeared to be an overlap in grounds for attending that brought a variety of benefits and purposes for participating in youth work.

The drama group illustrated this overlapping feature. It incorporated individual personal needs (in building confidence and associating with others) together with learning about social history (in researching, writing and performing on topics such as natural heritage or the holocaust) and with special interest (in drama-based creative arts). Thus, the drama group operated on many levels as a social activity, a learning environment and, group which directed its own affairs. It included beneficial aspects such as making friends, having fun in stimulating learning but also incorporated various levels of

challenge. Thus, although its primary function appeared to be socially constructed around interest in drama, the young people's reasons for participating in this group appeared to be multi-dimensional.

Thus, analysis of why young people attended youth work could not be reduced to a singular response, such as, 'doing activities'. Yet, when asked, the young people maintained that doing activities was an important part of their decision to attend. However, in two key areas, keeping out of trouble and gaining emotional support, youth work seemed to offer additional reasons. These are discussed in the following sections.

5.3.2 Engaging in youth work to keep out of trouble and stay safe

In reflecting on Ryan's experiences, I have already shown that he believed that youth work contributed by helping him to change from 'being a bit of a bam', it kept him out of trouble and helped him to find a clearer focus on his life. He was not the only young person who believed this. For example, Alex also indicated that youth work opened up new possibilities that helped him to stay out of trouble that he had experienced on the streets:

> It keeps me off the streets and out of trouble…and you meet all sorts of people who come up for different reasons.
>
> Alex

Paula's reasons for participation in youth work were similar:

> If I wasn't coming here, I'd be out getting drunk or something…but because I am here, I have like the workers…to tell me…sort of guide me…not like 'you do this or that', but like…they let me know where to go…like direct me a bit so I don't get myself into bother.
>
> Paula

Like Ryan and Alex, Paula appeared to have rejected a street-based lifestyle in favour of developing a positive future where the potential for 'trouble' was reduced. She attributed reduced potential for trouble to her participation in

youth work. This suggested a guidance function for youth workers in offering information and support, rather than telling her what she should do. The distinction between guiding and telling appeared important to Paula in empowering her to bring about desired changes in her life that would keep her out of 'bother'.

Sandra also said that youth worker guidance was helpful:

> You grow up and you get told at different stages, what's right and what's wrong, as you do it…but as we're growing up we're not like…sure of what to do…so, because I'm not in the house as much, when I am up here…[the youth workers]…are like telling me what's right and wrong…I've got older…I have more understanding of morality and stuff like that…when you go to the dancing you don't know what to do, 'cause there's not really anyone…apart from the bouncers and that…
>
> Sandra

This highlighted important changes that were happening in Sandra's life. Articulating a lack of life experience she suggested that young people were unsure of 'what to do', indicating that part of becoming older was about finding out how to live, to develop an understanding of right and wrong, and to make moral judgements and decisions. Previously she received this kind of guidance at home, but in other settings this kind of guidance was not available.

Taken together these comments suggest that, for some of the young people in this study, youth work helped them to take their lives in a different direction from one where they were getting into trouble on the streets. The young people suggested that youth workers offered guidance on how to take forward their lives in new directions. This showed the youth work setting as a place where young people could maximise the chances that were available to them and in this way contribute to enhancing their chances of leading a good life. This appeared cogent for those young people whose lives previously involved them in trouble or what they regarded as unsafe, street based activity.

The young people also talked about staying safe in reference to personal situations and to matters of health and safety. They regarded the setting as a safe space in which to explore sensitive issues or problems, or to examine topics they might not discuss elsewhere. Paula talked about feeling safe:

> If there's a fight…you feel a bit unsafe and insecure but the workers make sure that nothing gets out of hand or like, if someone needs help then they'll help them…its like they are always there… so the [youth] workers make me feel safe like that.
>
> Paula

On a personal and physical level Paula felt safe in the setting. Thus, youth work was a place where young people could seek guidance or support by talking with youth workers.

> They [youth workers] make sure young people are safe…at all times… and so there's always someone at the door and in the rooms to make sure everyone is safe
>
> Ali

Ali appeared to confirm the setting was a safe place, where youth workers were on hand to ensure everyone's safety.

Together, these ideas showed that the young people valued youth work because it offered a safe place where they could explore sensitive issues and share problems with youth workers, who listened and offered guidance. The young people could relax and 'be themselves' in a safe environment where their perception was that the potential for 'trouble' was less than on the streets. This suggested a level of emotional support that is developed in the next section.

5.3.3 Engaging in youth work for emotional support that could improve feelings of well-being

Thematic analysis suggested that youth work offered support for well-being. The equality of condition framework suggested that love, care and solidarity were important dimensions of equality and so I thought it would be interesting to select a range of quotations that might enable me to compare the young people's experiences of emotional support in youth work with other settings.

When talking about how her relationships with youth workers, compared to those with her parents, teachers or other adults, such as someone working in a leisure centre, Mags suggested:

> It's like…I think [youth workers] understand you more than your parents do…'cause like you can tell them some stuff that you don't want to tell your parents…and they'll like tell you, like give you advice and that. But if you were to say to your parents about it, and then I think they would like, they wouldn't take it the same way as they [youth workers] take it. I think they would just kind of go off their nut and then like [say], "Go to your room". But in here, they just like give you advice, so you don't need to go through all that and upset your parents. But I think like...they're…I think they're like kind of family if you know what I mean…they're kinda aunties or big sisters or older brothers...and all that, cause you can just tell them everything and they won't say anything to anyone else. Cause it's private and confidential.
>
> Mags

Mags explained the difference in her relationships with parents and youth workers, suggesting youth workers as understanding advice-givers, while talking to parents about the same topic might prompt a different or upsetting reaction. In this sense, being able to speak to a youth worker about 'stuff that you don't want to tell your parents' meant that Mags could receive emotional support, without the emotional upset, or response from her parents.

Being able to talk things through with a youth worker appeared to be important to Mags because she believed that the youth workers 'take it' differently. This suggested that she expected a youth worker response to be calm and less likely to cause an angry outburst or further upset.

She likened these conversations with youth workers to familial relations with an aunt or sibling, where there was trust and an understanding that such conversations were 'private and confidential'. Suggesting that youth workers would not go 'off their nut' may be interpreted to mean that Mags perceived them to be less judgemental and that she trusted youth workers not to prejudge information disclosed to them.

Consideration of youth workers as being like an aunt or sibling suggested that, for Mags, the boundaries between family and youth work were both clear and blurred. Boundaries were clear, in believing that workers would stay calm, give advice and not break a confidence, yet blurred, in thinking that their role was like a family member and therefore likened to a private relationship. However in saying 'they're kinda like aunties', Mags appeared to understand that the relationship was a professional one but perhaps in areas of emotional support, was similar to family relationships. This seemed to convey the kind of feeling associated with this type of support. It would have been interesting to examine how youth workers perceived their emotional attachments to young people and perhaps how they coped with 'taking it calmly' when disclosures were sometimes upsetting. However, that was beyond the scope of this study.

I also observed young people in the café area where there was regular laughter, young people hugging each other and smiling. Occasionally there was evidence of anger or frustration in, for example, missing a shot at pool or falling out with a friend. In overheard conversations during observations, examples of feelings in school and family were related to having a bad day, exam worries and falling out with parents. Craig gave a specific example of how school exams and family ties were linked to feelings or emotional state:

> I come up here sometime just to get away from my family…and like school…exams and…[workers]…work with us…its not easy to get a

> job and young people my age have a lot of aggression and can't take it out on anything…coming here helps me to feel better…makes it better fun.
>
> Craig

Craig suggests feelings and emotions are important in having fun and enjoying life. Ryan talked about rules in the setting and I asked what these were. He said they were not 'rules' as such:

> Rules that keep you safe…they're just like…[youth workers]…are there to talk to…if I'm feeling down about something I want to talk about…to get off my chest…I can just tell them, and they give me advice or just even to tell them…they don't even need to say anything…I feel better because its off my chest…but in other places [town centre or a nightclub] there's not really anyone to protect you…or to talk to about things.
>
> Ryan

Ryan's ideas about rules were possibly not rules at all, but rather suggested that in the youth work setting he felt safe and confident enough to talk through problems with youth workers, and gain skills that enabled him to deal with or manage his feelings. He claimed to experience these feelings in this setting but not in other places, which suggested that the relationships he formed here were different to those he experienced elsewhere.

Alex also suggested that if people were feeling low, they could come to youth work and their feelings would improve:

> Sometimes people come up here not feeling very good…and [attending this setting] helps them to feel better…and to believe in themselves…I like to see people feeling satisfied and having a laugh, feeling good about themselves, so I got involved in helping with that.
>
> Alex

Ali suggested that attending youth work had helped her to overcome feelings of shyness by enabling her to feel safe and importantly, that youth workers had alleviated her feelings of anxiousness and that she could talk to them about her problems:

> Say there's a quiet person like me…I shouldn't be singled out because I'm quiet and treated differently…so in here that doesn't happen…I get asked if I want to do things, the same as everyone else…that makes me feel comfortable… and also see that people are happy…not moping about…that's not what this place is for you know…they make sure you're OK and happy…there's no need to feel anxious, because there's always someone here you can talk to…if there is ever a problem.
>
> Ali

These extracts suggest that by engaging in youth work, the young people engaged in leisure type activity and they also sought emotional support from youth workers, with whom they enjoyed good relations of trust, and which appeared to enhance their sense of well-being.

5.4 Factors impacting on young people's reasons for attending

This chapter has suggested a number of factors that were evident in this setting, and impacted on young people's reasons for attending and engaging in youth work in two areas: social and emotional factors and cultural factors. These factors helped to create a value base and ethos that underpinned young people's experiences and learning about equality in this youth work setting and so were important in contextualising my analysis of findings. These factors combined to create a loving and caring ethos that was a key dimension of the equality of condition framework (Baker et al., 2004) and also of Davies (2005) requirement to work with and through peer groups in youth work.

5.4.1 Social and emotional factors

Neither of these factors is linked directly to the topic of equality. However, there were a number of social and emotional factors that to an extent, explained the young people's reasons for participating in youth work. These factors were also useful in showing aspects of the value base for youth work which underpinned the young people's experiences and learning about equality in youth work.

Social factors helped them to connect with each other, to associate with friends and to participate in fun, leisure time activity that included new and sometimes challenging activities.

Emotional factors included feelings of belonging and safety. It also appeared that youth work helped some young people to work through personal and social changes that they felt were important to, for example, becoming adult or forming relationships.

Those who attended for longer periods were often involved in specific projects or programmes that maintained positive feelings of worth, and appeared to foster positive self-image. Yet, over time, a changing level of participation was suggested:

> I don't come up as much as I used to…I'm at uni now, so I don't have much time…I still do the youth council…it's just kind of my age…I don't know…I've just maybe grown out of [youth work] a wee bit.
>
> Carole

Carole's pattern of attendance changed from daily, to once or twice a month. When I first met Carole, she was at the peak of her participation in youth work. She had been attending for a couple of years and was actively engaged in a range of programmes. These were located in the facility, or as part of wider developments, such as the Youth Council and Youth Strategy Group. By the end of the field work phase, 2.5 years later, this had reduced to attending

Youth Council meetings and very occasional visits. It appeared that she had simply outgrown the youth work setting.

This was typical of some other young people in this setting and suggested that attendance was not universal or long term. The young people initially seemed to value coming to youth work partly because of the level of emotional support from youth workers, who offered guidance and encouragement to develop ideas and work through change processes they associated with growing up. However, as they became more confident and formed their current or emerging identities, as Carole suggested, they grew into new lifestyles, and away from youth work.

5.4.2 Cultural factors

Participants connected with young people from different style groupings every time I attended the setting. There were always people hanging around the café (or waiting outside for the facility to open). Sometimes they stayed in their own peer groups, but often they moved around the setting, to participate in an activity or step outside for a while. When they did this, I observed them form cross-cultural relationships with people that they might not otherwise have connected with outside of the setting. This was because they identified with different youth cultural style groups, for example, trackers or Goths or because they were older or younger, or had different interests in sport or music.

Examination of why young people engaged in youth work suggested a range of cultural factors that impacted on their decisions and capacity to attend. This included cultural influences from outside of the setting, where youth work appeared to offer an alternative to street based culture and getting into trouble. It also included participation in cultural activity that ranged from performing arts to fundamental aspects of democracy.

There appeared also to be a socialisation function of participation in youth work that involved young people in practising how to engage with their own culture by increasing understanding about what it means to be adult, taking on roles and responsibilities, in order to function and fit within their own

communities. They also learned about other cultural perspectives that helped them to understand and mix across cultures. In this way the skills and insights they developed were useful in the setting but could also be applied in later life to help them form positive and productive social and cultural relations.

The social, emotional and cultural elements of youth work included references to becoming a peer educator, youth councillor and volunteer. Thus, in addition to offering something to do and a place to meet or make friends, the young people suggested that through youth work their levels of confidence improved, and their capacity to form relationships was enhanced. Detailed discussion of how these factors contributed to young people's experiences and learning about equality is developed in the next chapter.

5.5 *Reasons for engaging in this youth work setting*

Taking the findings from this chapter together, it was possible to identify the reasons why young people engaged in the youth work setting. According to the young people this was a largely positive experience through which they appeared to achieve a range of outcomes that contributed to their sense of well-being as a reason for attending. The findings suggest that engaging in this youth work setting helped young people to:

- Build self-confidence and self-belief
- Form a positive identity
- Transform their understanding of the world
- Co-operate with others
- Experience feelings of belonging and kinship
- Relax and enjoy a positive sense of well-being
- Influence decisions
- Reciprocate trust and respect in their relationships with others
- Volunteer to help others.

The identification of these reasons added to my understanding of why young people attended youth work. This clearly shows a variety of reasons for attendance that could be added to existing literature and theoretical debate about the nature and purpose of youth work.

In particular, the range of reasons that was evident in this generic setting could be used to strengthen the case for continued investment in the development of generic youth work. This study suggests that alongside the more formal discourses of youth justice and a social care agenda, generic youth work can be complimentary to services that are targeted or where young people are referred to attend.

Having analysed my own observations and young people's views, the next chapter examines the wider case setting further.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has shown the reasons why young people attended this youth work setting. This included a range of activities and groups as well as offering understanding of how youth work supports young people's social emotional and cultural development and as such can help to promote their well-being. These findings also showed the multi-dimensional nature of youth work that suggested young people participated in youth work for a variety of reasons but did not suggest that learning about equality was an overt or explicit reason for attending. However, the chapter shows how their reasons for attending might be underpinned by a value-base that promoted equality and facilitated young people's experiences of difference in the setting. This value-base is explored in the next chapter.

6 Analysis of the single case study setting

Chapter Outline

This chapter provides analysis of findings to explain two aspects of the youth work setting that appeared to contribute to the value-base within the setting: how young people appeared to make sense of their experiences from inside and outside of the setting and their participation as a volunteer.

These aspects appeared to create a value-base that underpinned the young people's experiences and perceptions of equality in the setting. Although the chapter discusses these aspects in light of young people's experiences of equality, its main purpose is to outline how this value-base provided the context for this study. Thus, the chapter offers analysis of context, those aspects of the setting that underpinned the single case setting, rather than specific aspects of their experiences of equality or youth work practice that contributed to learning about equality. These aspects are examined in later chapters.

6.1 How young people made sense of experiences inside the setting by considering their experiences from outside of youth work.

When asked to think about their experiences of equality in the setting, the young people sometimes talked about their experiences of equality and inequality in other settings. This helped them to make sense of their experiences of youth work by comparing what they already knew about other settings to what happened in the youth work setting. This was particularly noticeable in two areas, their experiences of schooling and of hanging around the streets.

6.1.1 Young people's perspectives and experiences of schooling compared to youth work

Some of the young people talked about their experiences of equality in terms of social structures or institutions outside of the setting. For some, their relationships with teachers and schooling were a point of reference:

> When me and my brother went to school…my brother got better marks than me and the teachers would say, why can't you be like your brother and get higher marks…so I'd think, well, obviously you don't know me very well if you have to ask. I hate when people say we're the same, like we're really two different people and totally different attitudes…so equality for me is about people seeing me for what I am and not just for being a twin… up here people…[in the youth work setting]…see you as yourself
>
> Jamie

When I asked him what he thought equality meant, Jamie drew on experiences from outside of the setting to suggest that in youth work he was treated as himself, and this was different from his perception of how he was treated by school teachers. This response showed that Jamie's understanding of equality was not about being treated the same as his brother, rather that he should be seen as himself. It appeared to Jamie that, because the youth workers got to know him better, he was treated as himself and different to his brother. This did not happen in school. Accordingly, Jamie suggested that equality was about treating people as themselves and not judging people on the basis of their similarities, or relationships to others.

When asked about her perceptions of equality in the youth work setting, Fiona also talked about her experiences of school:

> Normal people I would say, are these people, they can go into like the mainstream classes…in school I had to go into a smaller class 'cause I couldn't handle the bigger classes…you see the ones with..err…

> Qualifications and that, what I call normal…they're heading for a good job…I can't take on a full-time job.
>
> Fiona

Fiona, who was part of the DSG, constructed her understanding of equality by comparing her experiences of schooling to those of other young people she knew. By being put into a smaller class, she constructed an understanding of equality internally, by viewing people as normal and 'heading for a good job' which meant her construction of self was that she was different to the mainstream, and so, not 'normal'.

While the intention of moving Fiona to a smaller class was to support learning, this appeared to impact on her self-perception in terms of her ability to engage in mainstream activity. She appeared to value being able to sustain full-time employment. By not being part of what she perceived to be mainstream, the shift to a smaller class seemed to reinforce, for Fiona, a lack of ability and employment prospects.

In terms of confidence and self-efficacy, the early segregation in school appeared to bring a detrimental effect to Fiona's construction of herself as 'normal' or not normal. Yet, she valued her experiences in youth work because she was able to help young people, whose needs were both similar and different from her own, and to engage with the DSG.

This suggested that while a specific learning disability meant that Fiona was unable to sustain full-time, 'mainstream' employment, her involvement in helping others in the DSG helped her to feel valued and to make a positive contribution in the setting. While not being exactly the same as full-time work, the feelings she experienced in helping others offered Fiona a chance to feel equal to others.

The equality of condition framework is helpful in understanding that equality is not about treating everyone the same, but that people should have the same chances of achieving particular feelings of status, associated with 'equality of

esteem' as others (Baker et al, 2004, p. 34). Fiona's experiences also suggested that in this youth work setting the arrangements for learning were different to those in school, which enabled her to support others.

Another perspective on teachers and support for learning in school was noted by Paula in response to a question about what difference youth workers made to her feelings of safety and being in control:

> Teachers are there to teach you and you don't even listen to them…cause they don't even really know you that well…like one of my teachers 'told' me to do something and I said I'd already done it and he said 'no you've not, you're lying' so I started shouting at him and I was going to throw a chair at him…I've never felt like that before. Then I got into the Maths Base…and I got my old teacher and he knew me better…but by the time my other teacher found out it was too late, because I had been moved.
>
> Paula

Paula understood that teachers were employed to teach, but suggested that some young people didn't listen to what was being taught because, according to Paula, the teachers didn't get to know pupils very well. Paula's final comment suggested that, had the teacher in the chair incident known her, the outcome might have been different.

When compared to her involvement in the youth work setting, where Paula was a volunteer in the café and active participant in a number of groups, participation in youth work was a more positive experience. Paula was able to form relationships with people whom she perceived as taking an interest in getting to know her, rather than simply issuing instructions. When people took an interest, she believed that she could make a positive contribution.
Thus, for Paula, equality was about people getting to know and understand each other, rather than issuing instructions and directing behaviour. It appeared that the kind of relationships she formed were important. This was evidenced in her feelings towards the two teachers in the maths base. Using

the equality of condition framework could suggest that, for Paula, a loving and caring dimension was important to her understanding of equality.

Alternatively, Carole highlighted a more positive function of schooling in socialising young people. She saw school as part of a process whereby tradition and morality were passed to the next generation:

> It's the things that come from how you've been raised…that are passed on…through schools and things…helps you to judge…like your morals and that, how you live your life, and like traditions like bonfire night…I'd want to keep those and wouldn't like those traditions to change too much.
>
> Carole

This suggests that, in Carole's view, family and schooling both helped to teach moral beliefs, values and traditions that were important in learning about how to live life. Carole's view supported the maintenance of the status quo, and was perhaps underpinned by her experiences of schooling as largely positive. Carole was a university student who was also a popular youth councillor and actively involved in decision making around the youth facility. Her experiences in both school and youth work appeared to be positive. Carole suggested a view of equality, where she was able to take the opportunities available to her and use these to progress her learning which included learning that was socially constructed in association with others in the setting.

The range of external influences that impacted on the young people and their views on equality included schools, teachers, families and traditions. Analysis of the young people's experiences of teachers and schooling compared to their perceptions of equality in this case study setting appeared to be different in three areas. First, that equality did not mean that everyone was the same and that people should get to know them individually. Second, that feeling equal was about having the chance to develop a positive view of the self and to achieve the kind of status that was enjoyed by others. Third, that the formation of loving and caring social relations underpinned their feelings of being equal.

This analysis suggests that young people made sense of the meaning of equality by comparing their experiences of other settings they were familiar with, to the youth work setting. In making these comparisons, the young people suggest that in this youth work setting, youth workers were able to get to know young people individually and in groups, in ways that were different from school teachers. This study suggests youth work as a place where young people could develop a positive self-image and where the formation of loving and caring social relationships with youth workers appeared to underpin their sense of what equality meant.

6.1.2 Young people's perspectives and experiences of hanging around the streets compared to youth work

Street-life was another example of how young people used their experiences from outside of the setting to express their perspectives about their experiences of equality inside youth work. Drawing on their experiences of the wider youth culture, they commented on negative aspects of their lives that they said were connected to hanging around the streets.

I have already shown that one of the reasons why young people engaged in youth work was to keep out of trouble. In particular, four participants articulated a fear for their personal safety on the streets. This section examines how the young people made sense of the differences between their experiences of the youth work setting and the streets, in order to consider key aspects of the value base inside the setting.

I have also discussed the views of Alex, Paula and Ryan, who suggested that they engaged in youth work to keep out of trouble. In comparing their street experiences with youth work they, and others, suggested that some groups of young people made them feel uncomfortable or scared and that hanging around with a crowd, often led them into various forms of conflict with their parents, or other groups of young people.

My earlier analysis showed this as a reason for attending youth work, while this section shows how their experiences from outside helped them to make

sense of the meaning of equality inside the setting. Thus, while the sources of evidence are similar the analysis addresses a different aspect of the case study.

For example, Alan said he was more anxious outside than inside of the setting. I asked him to speculate about the social mixing inside the setting and why it might be different in here. He drew on his experiences from outside of the setting:

> Outside of here…em…people call you names and it can escalate into a situation where you feel more anxious…whereas in here that doesn't happen…the youth workers are always there…there's always a sense of authority, almost…not anything that they [the workers] abuse or anything…just the sense that if anything goes wrong, they will always help…not to like, pick sides, but to break things up…you never need to feel anxious because the workers are there to talk to if you have a problem.
>
> Alan

Alan's comments suggested that because youth workers were always there, this provided reassurance that meant young people were less worried inside the setting, than outside of it. In creating feelings of security, Alan suggested it was important for someone to be in authority and to prevent conflict situations from arising. Yet, in thinking about what this meant in light of his understanding of equality Alan suggested that this role needed to be balanced and should not lead youth workers to abuse their position of authority.

This idea of authority in youth work may seem contradictory to Davies' idea of tipping power towards young people. Yet, according to Alan, it was important in creating the conditions in which young people felt safe and were able to engage in the youth work setting without worrying about what might happen to them, or how situations might escalate into more serious trouble. Thus, even in a youth work setting where claims to fairness and equality were articulated, adult youth workers were needed in order to maintain safety in some situations.

As noted earlier, the setting included groupings of young people who adopted a range of contemporary styles that presented in music preference, dress code, hairstyle, use of make-up and other adornments, to signify membership of one style or cultural grouping or another. The young people suggested allegiances to a range of groups which did not always bring a positive outcome. I asked Craig to explain what he meant when he talked about youth culture:

> When you're younger, you, and I'm talking about fourteen and thirteen, you think everybody's out to get you and then, when you get a wee bit older, you start realising all your pals are in a group and they're all there…and nobody's out to get you. You're just having a laugh with them…[but]… If you get on to the streets...that's it…It's like you cannot really get back out of a gang…'Cause once you're in it, you're...you're either going to…one night go and do something really stupid or just…and then end up in the jail, or you're going to go out and then get jumped [attacked].
>
> Craig

This extract is useful in showing how Craig's perspectives on equality inside the setting could be linked to his earlier experiences from outside. It shows this in three areas.

First, he appreciated age as a factor in his understanding of difference by suggesting that what he had thought of previously as a 'gang' that would be targeted by other gangs was actually just a groups of friends and would not be a target for other groups.

Second, in terms of equality of condition Craig suggests different levels of respect and recognition, for example in the perception of status or feelings of belonging that come with being part of a group of friends or in a gang and that, according to Craig, once 'gang member' status was reached, it was difficult to break away from the gang.

Third, Craig generalises that by continuing to be in gangs young people risk being jailed or getting attacked. Thus, according to Craig, it would appear that life on the streets appears to reduce the chances of having the freedom to make the kind of choices that Baker at al.(2004) have suggested as important to realising equality.

Craig also talked of his fears about the number of young people carrying knives and he suggested that in the youth project it was different. I asked him why he thought this was the case:

> 'Cause...erm…I don't know…you have like a structured environment, and you just...that's just how it happens. You just get on and then…like…if you don't get on outside it's just your problem. It's just more stress you're putting on yourself and that's why [up here] everybody tries to get on with everybody…so all that other stuff doesn't happen.

In the equality of condition framework, this relates to structures in youth work that are different to those on the streets. Craig's comment suggested that structure was important in determining how relationships developed. For example, his response suggested that a structured youth work environment brought a diversity of young people together in relationships of solidarity that consequently reduced conflict and stress.

In this sense, Craig seemed to concur with those who see youth work as a place of sanctuary, viewed as 'a safe space away from the daily surveillance and pressure of family, schooling and street life' (Jeffs and Smith, 2010, p. 5). Baker et al, (2004, p. 41) have suggested that 'equality of condition is about enabling people to exercise real choices…[and]…challenges the basic structures of contemporary societies'. In this sense, Craig's suggestion of youth work as 'a structured environment' that was different to the streets, does not imply a more authoritarian environment or one that is always adult driven.

Indeed, there is also evidence to suggest that street gangs can be highly structured (Deuchar, 2009) and that young people outside of the gang can also

be highly sensitised to those hierarchies and their place in relation to them. Craig's comments suggested that he was outside of gang culture and this caused him stress. Yet, literature also suggests that while gangs may be highly structured, not all groupings of young people hanging around the streets would described themselves as a gang, and that gang-talk perpetuates a range of myths about gangs and helps maintain a pathologising discourse on young people who choose to hang around the streets (Hallsworth and Young, 2008).

However, the literature has shown that youth work is less structured and informal than for example, schooling, and in Scotland it is often developed as 'social purpose education' (Martin, 2007, p. 10) which sees participants in youth work as social actors who engage in dialogue to promote social change.

In this sense, Craig's comments suggested a complexity of differences when comparing structures in youth work with the streets. Thus, I did not assume that Craig's comments about structure meant that youth work was more or less structured than the streets, rather that the structures were different.

I asked Craig to explain what he meant by suggesting youth work as a structured environment:

> Well, you've got football, you've got snooker, you've got things to do. Basically, there's nothing outside of here…People say the UK's rich and all, but it's not. Most places…there's pockets of it, just wee pockets of it…[affluence]…but everywhere, people are poor…do you know what I mean? Just...and that's how it goes.

Craig equated structure with activity, while outside of the youth work setting he suggested there was not much for young people to do. On one level structure could be interpreted as the means of organising activity, for example in the youth work curriculum or programme. Yet, Craig's view, suggested a link to poverty, by inferring that when people did not have money to access alternative provision, they could participate in the youth work setting.

In this sense, structure could be related to equality of condition, in terms of the equality of resources dimension, where economic, social and cultural capitals are recognised as important but where use of time, access to goods and services and the lived-in environment are also important in understanding how focus might shift from a market-driven capitalist view on how resource needs might be met (Baker et al, 2004). There was a sense of futility in his suggestion that, 'people are poor…and that's just how it goes' which suggested the power of hegemony, in accepting the status quo.

In summary, it appeared that comparing their experiences of inside and outside of the setting facilitated young people's appreciation of the youth work setting as a place where they could build relationships and avoid conflict. This appeared to enhance the potential for people to 'get on' and so, promote more cohesive social relations which, according to Baker et al. (2004), are critical to achieving equality of condition. This led to consideration of how this cohesion was developed through crossing cultural and social boundaries.

6.2 An ethos of volunteering in this youth work setting

6.2.1 Experiences of volunteering

Some of the young people were involved as volunteers in the setting. Volunteering was encouraged, but not taken up by all of the young people in the setting:

> I come up whenever it's open…I do several clubs and I'm part of the youth council…I've also volunteered at the games group. I come up here because I enjoy it...I've started volunteering and so I'm doing a Dynamic Youth Award … it's something I never thought I'd do, but I just clicked with it, and I enjoy it.
>
> Ryan

Ryan's view was consistent with Dinham's (2007) research which shows a direct relationship between participation and social well-being. A strong volunteering ethos among youth workers in this setting meant that young people like Ryan who would not have considered volunteering, were encouraged to increase their involvement and said they enjoyed the feelings they experienced when helping others. Thus, the setting was a place where people could volunteer which helped add to the programme.

Similarly, Sam suggested volunteering as one of her reasons for attending:

> I volunteer… and I help at disability sports… I got to know a lot of people…just helping them out…like if somebody was struggling…I'll teach them how to do it….like at Badminton.. I'll show them how to hit the shuttles…that kind of thing…
>
> Sam

Sam's role as a volunteer coach at badminton evolved from her experiences of playing Badminton at international level. She was encouraged by youth workers to use her skills to coach others. Although Sam identified this coaching aspect of her volunteering role, she also formed relationships by getting to know young people and taking a helping approach which I observed as including other activities, not only badminton. Other DSG participants reported helping as a kind of volunteering:

> When I come here, I find I can meet up with my friends, hear the latest, what's happening and all that, and er…find out what's going on in their lives…I can help them maybe…like kind of voluntary help…not something they have to go to a worker for…If they've got a minor problem…I try and help people out…I just feel, I love to help people, especially people with special needs.
>
> Elaine

Elaine suggested that she came to youth work to meet and catch up with friends. Her learning difficulties meant she was unable to sustain full-time

employment and attended a work experience placement. Elaine was not a volunteer, but helping others at the DSG appeared to raise her self-esteem.

Thus, for some young people, volunteering offered a sense of purpose beyond attending for individual benefit. This process of helping others has been associated with feelings of health and happiness (Borgonovi, 2008). Applying the equality of condition framework offered one way of interpreting volunteering as helping to build dimensions of respect and recognition, of adding resources and accessing resources and changing power relations, each of which are discussed in detail in the following chapter which examines young people's views on equality in this single case setting.

6.3 An overview of the youth work setting

My analysis of the case study setting suggested that, in addition to what was already known about the setting, the young people's experiences and perceptions of equality were constructed in a social and informal environment that included soft furnishings, where they could relax and enjoy a chat in a warm and welcoming informal setting.

The young people appeared to develop their learning in an environment where, compared to schooling, the atmosphere was informal and they were able to form different kinds of relationships that compared favourably with being out on the streets. Young people felt safe in youth the youth work setting.

The layout of the café space was designed with safety in mind. For example, informal conversations happened in specifically designed 'booths' (a bit like a 'Walzer' showground ride without the movement) where small groups of friends could hold private conversations. These booths were also open to the whole café area, and therefore everyone inside the booth could be seen.

This meant that young people could get to know each other in a relaxed setting that was both a private and a public space. They could also get to know people

whose experiences were quite different to their own by mixing with each other in the open café area which helped them to cross cultural boundaries that outside of this setting, they might not have crossed. This large social space also provided an informal setting for young people to socialise in and meet up with friends or engage in conversations with youth workers.

Chapter Summary

Taken together, this analysis suggests youth work as an alternative learning environment to schooling, which is safer than the streets as a place for learning about life, and where, in addition to a range of social and educational projects or programmes, volunteering helped the young people to improve their feelings of self-esteem. This analysis of two key aspects: making sense of their experiences and engaging in volunteering, helped show the specific context for this study, in which it was possible to examine various aspects of difference and so consider young people's views about equality in this single case setting. Their views are discussed in the following chapter.

7 Young people's views on equality in the youth work setting

Chapter Outline

This chapter examines the young people's perceptions and experiences of equality in order to respond to research question two: Do young people perceive and experience equality in the setting? The chapter adds to the ideas outlined in the literature review which suggested that young people could take an experiential approach to learning about equality in youth work. Chapter six has also introduced initial responses given by participants when asked about the meaning of equality. Building on their initial ideas, this chapter uses equality of condition (Baker et al, 2004) as a theoretical framework to examine the young people's perspectives on the meaning of equality in more detail and considers their views about equality in youth work.

The first part of the chapter, reports on the young people's views while the second part shifts to consider how these compare to the equality of condition framework (Baker et al., 2004). By applying the equality of condition lens to their experiences some evidence was provided to show that all five dimensions of equality of condition were present and to an extent demonstrated micro-level social change in the youth work setting.

7.1 Perspectives on the meaning of equality

7.1.1 What young people said equality meant to them

As shown earlier, I asked specific questions about the equality topic, such as: What does equality mean to you? Is there anything that happens in here that makes you think about equality? In this way, the young people's responses gave an indication of their level of awareness and their own understandings of equality. In addition to experiences from inside the setting, young people drew on their experiences from outside of the setting and of life in general, to illustrate their answers.

For example, in Phase I, Derek was asked what equality meant:

> Equality to me means no racism and no prejudices…or anything like that, everyone in the world should be equal no matter what colour, race, religion or anything…you shouldn't eh…be racist against them…and you shouldn't just say anything that would hurt them about what they are or who they are…equality means basically to live life with people…they might be different from you…but you should also consider that we're really just the same people underneath.
>
> Derek

This extract suggests that Derek's ideas about equality were grounded in fair and equal treatment that, regardless of race or religion, people should be capable of living life among people who, despite diversity are similar to each other. In terms of the equality of condition framework, Derek's view could be interpreted as supporting the love, care and solidarity dimension of equality, by suggesting that regardless of difference, people should live together in harmony in order to 'bring meaning warmth and joy to life' (Baker et al, 2004, p. 37).

When I asked if the issue of equality ever come up when he was out and about with friends or at the youth work setting, he replied:

> Never [*emphatically*], because we just all treat each other equal….no matter what happens we just treat each other equally, I don't believe in racism or anything like that.
>
> Derek

Thus, in thinking about the issue of equality, Derek did not link his ideas to the youth work setting, but emphasised that he and his friends treated each other equally, which appeared to suggest a commitment to a basic human right that people should be treated equally. This was similar to other Phase I responses, when young people were asked if equality was ever talked about in the setting:

> Erm, not really, I suppose erm...no, not really…Because, it's one of those things that erm, you do without thinking about…well, it should be done without thinking about, you shouldn't have to.
>
> Ali

> No, not really, no.
>
> Craig

> I don't really know much about equality…its never talked about…so I don't really know
>
> Joe

Ali, Craig and Joe suggested that equality was not specifically talked about in the setting. Ali suggested that equality 'should be done without thinking', while Craig and Joe were unsure about the topic.

These perceptions suggested there were no explicit equality intervention in this setting. Yet, when asked in phase II to think about what equality meant, the young people could identify examples which incorporated ideas from a range of discourses about equality. This was shown in comparing responses about the meaning of equality. In phase I, responses included:

> I don't really know… it's interesting for me to think about.
>
> Sandra

> It kind of makes you think about why things are the way they are…It's given me stuff to think about.
>
> Carol

> I come up here for a laugh so I don't think there's much to do with equality in here.
>
> Craig

These responses suggested that the subject of equality was not openly discussed in the setting. Yet, during Phase II, when asked about equality and whether they had anything to add to their views from Phase I, their understanding appeared to be more refined:

> In here…everyone gets treated the same…whether you…the way you dress, the way you look, if you're male or female or whatever, you just get treated the same.
>
> Sandra

> In youth work…it should just be everyone…everyone being equal and helping each other out…that doesn't mean everyone does the same thing or the same job...but they do the same thing at different levels, kind of thing.
>
> Carol

> It's just about giving respect…like the old saying, give the respect you want to get back
>
> Craig

Together, these extracts show that in Phase I, these young people were unsure about the meaning of equality, yet by Phase II, Sandra, Carol and Craig gave different answers. The reasons for this change in response were unclear and potentially complex. For example, these changes could be about something that happened in youth work, or could have been in response to being asked about it twice by me, or in light of something that happened in their lives.

If I had only gone with the first interviews, the finding might have been that they did not think about equality at all. This would have been interesting in itself, but returning for a second interview was useful in gaining deeper understanding of their changing perspectives.

By phase II, Sandra saw equality as fair treatment while Carol said it was about helping each other and being able to do the same things as other people and Craig suggested that giving respect would be reciprocated. Together these ideas suggested that people could be regarded as equals despite having different skills, capacities and levels of capacity.

The following answers were also given in response to questions about their perceptions of equality in the setting:

> We're all different in the way we look differently, act differently but we all have respect for each other
>
> Sandra

Sandra suggested that, despite differences, young people, in this setting, respected each other, inferring that respect was important to understanding what equality was about or how it may be achieved. Paula also spoke about respect:

> There's not really 'equality' its just that they [youth workers] treat you with respect and just…they know everybody and everybody is different
>
> Paula

Paula suggested that the respect shown by youth workers towards young people appeared to suggest a feeling of equal status, suggested by Baker et al, (2004) as part of the respect and recognition dimension of equality. Paula also said that people with different needs should be treated differently and by suggesting that youth workers knew the different needs of everyone who attended the setting, she seemed to imply that they would use this overview to ensure that people were treated according to their needs. In this sense, respect and recognition were things that young people felt, in relation to their own experiences. However the worker's role seemed important in creating a learning environment that was conducive to developing respect and creating a sense of equality.

In one sense, this implied level of trust in youth worker's judgements, was a useful perspective as it meant that responses to different needs could be developed as appropriate. Yet, in another sense, if taken too far, it may build dependency and mitigate young people's development of their own capacities to weigh up situations and make their own judgements about fairness and respect. However, there was no evidence to suggest that this was the case in this setting, and by responding to questions with a question, there was evidence that workers deliberately sought to avoid creating dependency.

Ryan also talked about respect to show his understanding of equality:

> Say somebody is getting wide, or picking a fight with you…you lose your respect for them, but if they come and apologise and like, be the bigger man, that's…you can respect them for that… so I think, although you can lose respect for somebody, you can work at it and get it back…in the end everyone's friends…up here, anyway.
>
> Ryan

Ryan understood respect as a dynamic process that was neither assumed nor fixed and he suggested that respect was something that could change depending on his interactions with others.

According to the young people in this study, it appeared to me that an overview of how their conceptualisation of equality could be interpreted as the absence of prejudice or discrimination on grounds of difference where fairness and respect are important factors in enabling young people to act, individually or together, in order to develop capability to form loving, caring and equal relationships.

Having drawn this overview of equality from what the young people said about its meaning, I needed to examine key aspects of their views in order to refine my understanding of their experiences of equality in this youth work setting.

7.2 Views about experiences of equality

This section continues the discussion from the last section to show what the young people said about their experiences of equality in the youth work setting. Their experiences included three important aspects in terms of their human rights and opportunities to participate, their sense of fair treatment and a concern for age-based stereotyping. Their experiences were also evident in three areas of the programme - the Disability Sports Group, International Youth Exchange and Youth Council.

7.2.1 Talking about experiences of human rights and equal opportunities

The literature review identified policy and practice discourses that included human rights and equal opportunities. Thus, it was not surprising to find these discourses in this setting. When talking about her perspective on the meaning of equality, Ali suggested:

> I feel everyone should be treated erm…equally…everyone should have equal rights and stuff…like being allowed to take responsibility for themselves as well.
>
> Ali

This extract suggests that Ali believed that equality was about equal treatment and was enshrined in the rights and responsibilities of everyone. Ali appeared to be aware that with rights came responsibilities, and suggested that everyone should 'be allowed' to take responsibility for themselves. Ali's perception of equality was consistent with human rights discourse that is grounded in asserting a series of rights and entitlements that enable children and young people to take a full and equal part in society (United Nations, 1989).

Yet, her idea of responsibility being 'allowed' seemed counter to ideas about equality. If taking responsibility is part of a rights discourse, then it seems

unlikely that Ali should seek someone's permission, as suggested in her statement on 'being allowed', to exercise her rights, or to take responsibility?

If Ali's perception is typical, it would appear that the starting point in assertion of their rights is, for young people, to seek permission to be responsible. This suggests that to become someone with responsibility, young people have to wait until they are 'allowed' to do so. This starting point appears fundamental to understanding of young people's experiences of equality because it suggests a negative view of power, rather than one where power is shared. In this sense, rights and responsibilities may not be seen as a basic entitlement, they need to be earned by reaching a required status, for young people to be allowed to assert their rights and take responsibility for their actions.

Yet, this was not the starting point for all of the young people in this study. For example, Ryan and Paula did not talk about rights. Instead they talked about equal access to activities or facilities such as the youth exchange or volunteering in the cafe:

> Em…it was only £30 to go to Croatia, which was good…we did a lot of fund raising to keep the cost low enough for everyone to afford.
>
> Ryan

> It's just…[the café]…a cheaper version of the vending machines and you're helping…like you're giving other people like help, who don't have a lot of money...and it's easier for them to buy stuff.
>
> Paula

These extracts suggests an understanding of why it was important to fund raise or volunteer in the café to give people a fair chance of participating in the exchange or purchasing goods. This suggested that discourses in youth rights and equal opportunities were present in the setting. However, it was unclear if the action taken to promote fairness, in the exchange costs or in purchasing goods from the café, came from the young people or the workers. The young people seemed to understand that equality was not simply about having

opportunities, but included having the capacity to access a fair share of resources to facilitate access and uptake of those opportunities.

7.2.2 Talking about their experiences of fair treatment and access

When asked about their views on equality, the following responses from Carol and Ali suggested that fair and equal treatment were also important. These responses were typical but not identical to the responses given by most of the young people in this study:

> Well…its just about everyone being treated equally, regardless of their sex, sexuality or age or whatever….
>
> Carol

> Erm, well you have the disabilities group, they're like…when they like use the hall and stuff…I feel that means they're being treated equally, because they're also...just because like…they have disabilities and that, they're still allowed to use the sports hall and make the use of it, you know, the same as everyone else is.
>
> Ali

Carol's comment suggested that equality was about equal treatment regardless of social group or status, while Ali's comment on the games hall suggested that access and use of facilities for people of all abilities were important. These were typical of responses given by other young people who suggested that everyone who attended the facility was treated fairly. Neither Carol nor Ali suggested that everyone did exactly the same thing, nor were they viewed as being the same, but their comments indicated that, in this setting, it was possible for people to access resources and that this illustrated their views on equality, suggesting that sharing resources was thought to be important. For example, I asked Mags how and why she got involved in the World Issues Group:

> [The youth worker] who runs it…came up to me, and he's pure 'You've been really good to us' 'cause, when I did my work experience I helped him out with a lot of stuff…...we played this game and it's like me and my pal Meryl ended up being the Banana People. We had to clean…scrubbing the bananas and we only got paid 3 pence… so getting involved…it makes me feel like quite good about myself, 'cause I know I'm doing something good for other people.
>
> Mags

In this extract, Mags refers to her school work experience week, which she completed in the setting. A youth worker affirmed her capacity to contribute effectively by saying how 'good' she had been in helping with a simulation exercise about the lives of people in poor countries. This experience appeared to solidify her resolve to do something about alleviating poverty which led to positive feelings of self-worth, through 'doing good' for others.

The combination of youth worker affirmation and experiential learning seemed to enhance Mags' understanding of her own capacities and about the different lives of others. Each of these alone, would have raised awareness and understanding of the equality topic. First, in affirming her personal status and capacity to function in adult employment, the worker had intervened at a critical moment in Mags consideration of her future. Second, in gaining insights into an alternative lifestyle that was driven by poverty not privilege, Mags decided to act in a particular way to do something about this.

However, this understanding and affirmation seemed to inspire her towards praxis. By reflecting on what she had learning, about herself and world poverty, she took action to change the world, on both personal and social levels. Despite the small scale nature of this action, in terms of collecting pennies, the possibility of a different future was apparent to Mags.

Mags' view was similar to Rawls (1971) theory of social justice. As discussed in the literature review Rawls' suggested that by developing social contracts and structures in society that promote fairness the benefits of justice should be

accrued by those people who are in greatest need. However, it is questionable, within current configurations of power, whether people are prepared to give up riches to facilitate this.

Ryan used his role as a peer educator to exemplify equality within the setting:

> It's hard to explain, but you understand them…[young people]…better and how to communicate a lot easier because there's no…there's not really an age barrier.
>
> Ryan

This suggests that he believed understanding, communication and removal of age barriers were required in order to achieve equality. As a peer educator, he gave up some of his time as a resource for learning and connecting with other young people. Thus, despite differences in, for example, religion or culture, Craig further suggested that a lot of people were equal to each other and he suggested that treating people well, would be reciprocated:

> There are people of different…like religion or from different countries…there are a lot of other people...who are equal to you…if you treat someone good… they'll treat you the exact same.
>
> Craig

Thus, according to Ryan and Craig, understanding difference and respectful communication were important in the struggle for equality.

These ideas were echoed in Mags' perspective on her involvement in the World Issues Group:

> [the youth workers]…always treat everyone the same, like no matter what kinda way they dress or anything, they always treat them the same way…they do lots of penny appeals to try and make money, more pennies in the world, so that they can er…stop poverty in other countries…so, they're trying to make people equal like by giving them

> money…so they would switch with us…Well like, we're aiming to, like we're asking six people and then those six people are going to ask another six people, and then by the time every person asks another six people, we're going to get a penny off everyone in the world. And then er, we're going to send it away to Oxfam.
>
> Mags

In this statement, Mags suggests that being treated the same by youth workers was important, and that through projects like the world issues group, and its penny appeals, she had gained some insights into poverty and inequality across the world.

She hinted at a 'switch' between poor and rich countries that could, in a rudimentary sense, indicate an understanding of how aspects of poverty might be addressed by switching resources from rich countries to poor areas. Despite not working through the implications or specific meaning of this switch, her comments about a 'ripple effect' of penny giving, suggested the possibility of a fairer distribution of wealth, which was in line with the equality of condition framework that called for social action on a variety of levels.

However, from what Mags said, it was not clear to me how far this 'switching' could go, or on what changes might be needed to achieve such a switch and how these might be achieved on a larger scale. The idea that change was needed if equality was ever to be achieved underpinned the young people's experiences of equality. This idea was also suggested in their experiences of age-based stereotyping where, to an extent, the young people found their experiences in youth work to be different from elsewhere.

7.2.3 Talking about age-based stereotyping

In Phase I, all of the young people were aware of difference but did not attribute their awareness to any specific intervention within the setting. Some claimed they had not thought about it until I asked them and each offered

different ideas on their understanding of what equality meant. Joe's view of equality incorporated fair treatment regardless of age;

> …I think it's about treating everyone the same…but then sometimes that means we are all stereotyped.
>
> Joe

When suggesting that young people were stereotyped Joe appeared annoyed and so implied that he meant negative stereotyping.

Jack provided evidence of age based stereotyping in his description of the differences between the youth work setting and the shopping centre:

> We're all stereotyped…like the adults in here [youth worker] actually talk to you and listen to you and your friends…but down the town like, the security people…they just don't really care, if you're under 21...they don't want you in the shopping centre.
>
> Jack

This extract shows that Jack identified differences in how young people were treated by adults in the youth work setting compared to in town. He suggested that young people under 21 were stereotyped and that people in town didn't care about them because of their age. Alternatively, in youth work, he suggested youth workers talked to young people and listened to them. This highlighted a view that outside of the setting young people were treated less well than people who were older. Paula shared experiences of surveillance:

> Like, if you go into a shop…they're pure watching you 24/7 because you're younger and then when an adult goes in, they don't care…they just let them go about the place but when people my age go in, they pure have their eyes on us in case we go and do something wrong.
>
> Paula

Paula uses this example of age-based discrimination from outside of the setting to suggest that the surveillance of young people was a sign of a stereotypical view that they would 'do something wrong'. Paula's comments suggested a lack of respect for young people that was similar to Giroux's concerns about the demonization of youth in what he called a suspect society (Giroux, 2009), where young people are routinely viewed in a negative light. This suggested a concern about stereotyping as the basis of discrimination.

Paula's comments were interesting because they highlighted a popular social discourse about young people that, as shown in the literature review, makes it difficult to think about how they might be regarded as citizens, able to exercise their human rights, when they appear to be so keenly discriminated against on the grounds of their age (Bessant, 2007).

Questions of citizenship rights were also central to Ryan's frustration at not getting his point across inside the youth work setting:

> Sometimes it is like, you're such and such, and I'm more important than you…a lot of people nowadays think that because they are older, they are much more important… so having equality is an important thing...it makes it easier to get your point across…is less frustrating.
>
> Ryan

Ryan's comment suggested that some people, including adults he had encountered both inside and outside of the setting, thought they were more important than young people. He went on to suggest that equality was important in making it easier to get his point across. This suggested two things. First, that 'having equality' was helpful to Ryan and young people like him, to get their point across to adults, and in developing the capability for fuller participation in society. Second, by getting his point across in a less frustrating way, there may be a possibility for dialogue that could help to reduce the negative effects of age-based discrimination by contributing to the formation of more co-operative power relations between young people and adults.

Ryan appeared to suggest that in the youth work setting young people's relationships were not mediated by age-based expectations as they were in other settings, and suggested that youth workers countered the negative effect of stereotyping:

> They make you feel like equals…its quite equal between us and them 'cause you discuss things with them…they don't just decide what they're going to do…they involve you…you get to make decisions.
>
> Ryan

This suggested that Ryan's relationship with youth workers was based on feeling equal to them and also on dialogue which meant that decisions were discussed in advance of being taken, and that sometimes young people made those decisions. Again this appeared to contribute to understanding the power dimension of equality within the setting, which appeared to facilitate learning about democratic participation through decision making processes within the youth work setting as part of the public domain (Baker et al, 2004).

However, despite this progress towards democratic education, inside the setting gender stereotyping was suggested as a problem.

7.2.4 Talking about difference in gender and ability

While involving young people in democratic processes some young people also encountered gender based inequality in the setting. For example, when asked to think about equality in this setting, Annie and Fiona from the DSG said:

> We really should have more things downstairs for the girls…Its basically football for the boys…girls can join in if they feel up to it but I feel we're going to get hurt more than the boys…it's a rough game... so I think the girls and boys should be equal…whereas now the boys get footie and that, we've got the pool and that's it…they get both.
>
> Annie

While Fiona suggested:

> The girls want to do…erm…keep-fit as well, they want to try and like make other friends as well…like the boys are making a lot of friends downstairs [at football]…You can't really play football 'cause they play too rough… I don't think the girls have the same chances, because they have got nothing to do up here.
>
> Fiona

These comments were based on 'common sense' stereotypes that perpetuate inequality in suggesting, for example, that 'football is for boys and is rough'. Thus, according to Annie and Fiona, provision was offered around stereotypical lines and they felt there was nothing for them to do. Yet, this configuration of activity was not something the youth workers or volunteers appeared to challenge, which suggested that perhaps the feelings expressed by Annie and Fiona, could indicate that they did experience indirect gender discrimination in this setting.

I asked if anything was done about these things or if they spoke to workers about it:

> No, we've never actually went into it. I don't know. We would like to do more stuff, to make it more interesting.
>
> Annie

> Well, some of the girls asked the staff in here 'Can we play basketball or play tennis and we'll see how many people we can get' – but they don't ask anybody. It feels like there's nothing for the girls to do up here.
>
> Fiona

It would be easy to attribute this suggested inactivity to DSG volunteers, who were often parents or unqualified youth workers because perhaps they were

not aware of their role in challenging stereotypes. Yet, it was also possible to find examples of young women who did participate in, and enjoy, playing football. There were also young women outside of the DSG, for example hanging around the pool table who watched the young men, rather than play alongside them. Further, in observations I recorded youth workers challenging gender stereotyping around the pool table:

> Bob [a youth worker] asked Jean why she didn't join Alex for a game of pool. She said she couldn't play so Bob suggested she could learn. She just smiled and Alex, mid-shot at the pool table, called over 'Aye that'll be right I'm not getting beat by a lassie'. Bob spent about five minutes talking with Jean, Alex and George (the young man playing pool with Alex) suggesting they stereotyped each other. He challenged them about why they felt it was OK to judge people by the way they looked, their gender or race. They agreed that it was not OK but said it was hard, when all of their friends did it and that people would laugh at them for example, for Alex, this was about getting beat or for Jean, it was about playing pool instead of joining the rest of the young women mostly to talk about 'nothing much'.

This extract shows another aspect of the complexity of experiences that informed young people's tendency towards stereotyping, which appeared to be multi-layered in terms of the individual's perspective, their relationships with others and wider life experiences. Further, I asked Fiona why she thought nothing was done:

> Umm, I think because they [boys] like football, and it means that if we [girls] do something one week, they won't come up because they're not playing their football.
>
> Fiona

Both Fiona and Annie were involved in the Disability Sports Group but were not particularly into football, thus, felt there could be more on offer to young women. Their comments suggested that gender inequality was an issue on two

levels. First, there appeared to be no alternative to football for young women at the DSG and there was a perception that young men would not attend if football was withdrawn.

Second, the range of activity for young women was limited, and this made it more difficult for them to keep fit and make friends, while the young men could make friends by mixing in the sports hall. Thus, gender appeared to impact on the chances and choices for young women to participate in sports in the DSG and was suggested as a barrier by some young women.

This exemplified the limitations of equal opportunities as a strategy for promoting equality. For example, the young women in this study had many opportunities to participate in sport and fitness activity but because they believed it to be 'too rough' they chose not to take part. In this sense, the opportunity was not authentic to their understanding, and albeit stereotypical view, of football.

Equality of condition takes the view that it is the capability to make real choices, as distinct from having many opportunities that are not real opportunities that is important in promoting equality. Annie and Fiona's choices were limited by gender stereotyping they encountered and helped maintain. However, one member of the group, Sam, had improved so much that she represented Scotland in international competition.

Thus, where an individual showed capacity or a level of self-belief or if there was a critical intervention by a worker the offer of an opportunity can, in itself, lead to positive outcomes. Yet, the problem of capability remains because, regardless of the opportunity offered, the young people need to be capable of taking up that opportunity.

There were many positive aspects to the DSG, as a group that addressed issues of stereotyping on grounds of ability. Organised through the Federation of Disability Sports, this group facilitated participation through providing sporting opportunities for disabled young people with a range of impairments.

Yet, there were also differing opinions on how participating in youth work changed their perspectives about difference, which for some young people appeared to facilitate the creation of what Joe called a better outlook on life:

> If we only stick to our own outlook right, you're not meeting different people…but coming here, you get to meet people with different ideas or different learning needs and you talk to them and get to understand their outlook or their needs, then you start to play football with them or talk more…and you get to understand what they're about…or if it's a different style…what their style is all about so…coming here gives you a better outlook on life, cause it gives you a better understanding of people, really.
>
> Joe

Joe suggested that youth work facilitated understanding of difference by offering a space for young people to meet and mix socially and that this helped him to see a wider perspective on outlook, learning needs, and style. Joe's prejudices about ability and cultural style were challenged and this helped him to understand and show respect for others.

This section has shown how the young women from the DSG said they experienced gender inequality yet, also how the DSG addresses inequality by encouraging young people, like Sam, to achieve their full potential. It also enabled young people, like Joe, who were not identified as disabled, to mix with people from the DSG, and so promote understanding of difference.

However, while the experiences of gender stereotyping experienced by Annie and Fiona were not repeated in other interviews, I observed posters that appeared to use stereotypical gender images to promote beauty therapy sessions (posters showing young and glamorous women) and live gigs (posters showing young men playing guitars). This suggested that more research was needed in order to understand how stereotyping impacts on young people's lives.

7.2.5 Talking about identity and cultural difference in the Youth exchange group

When I asked Craig to tell me about whether equality happened in the youth work setting he talked about the youth exchange and reflected on his experiences of meeting a group of young Muslims for the first time:

> You get to know people from different countries and different religions and everything…I had a lot of problems with like getting to know people and I didn't trust anybody that I didn't know. Then, through that…[youth exchange]…I just learned everybody's the same, never judge a book by its cover, d'you know what I mean?
>
> Craig

The international exchange, created a chance for Craig to meet young people who were different and whose beliefs and values were different to his own. In this way young people like Craig could meet Muslim young people through youth work. Mixing across cultural boundaries appeared to help overcome problems of trust and to learn that despite differences, such as those related to lifestyle or religion, young people are similar.

> They were Muslim…it was totally different because er…it just makes you think, like nobody's different, it's just the way you're perceiving them and that…it was good man, because we got to know a wee bit of their history and it was good just to like learn.
>
> Craig

Craig's opinion of Muslim young people and Muslim religion were initially based on media reporting of the so-called 'war on terror'. Getting to know the young people behind his preconceptions prompted Craig not to prejudge people on the basis of what he could see or thought he knew about them.

Giroux (2005) suggests that when developing emancipatory practice, it is important to make colonial and other histories visible in order to reconfigure

understanding of the world. Having learned about cultural and historical differences through the youth exchange, Craig could apply his understanding about difference to other aspects of his life now, and in future. Thus, the youth exchange could impact on his views of difference beyond time spent in the youth work setting. This suggested that youth work experiences might impact on young people's lives beyond the time when they attended the setting.

Baker et al (2004) have argued that by challenging cultural assumptions new ideas are produced thus, by applying this framework to what young people talked about it was possible to see how the young people developed new ideas which in turn helped them to reconsider their identities.

Craig's response was typical of those young people who were involved in the youth exchange group and who described their experiences of it as life changing:

> It's been fantastic, a great experience…and I've met people that I'd never have met and we've exchanged e-mail addresses and will stay in touch for a long time…I think we'll be friends for many years… just because they came from different countries…they're not really that different…they all have their own hobbies and like we had some arguments over football and things like that…but with all the people speaking different languages and using signs or broken English….it worked… we communicated and found out about the way we live….not like the tourist stuff…but the way we all lived…em…our everyday stuff
>
> Ryan

Again, despite language and cultural barriers, Ryan said the exchange helped him to find out about how young people in other European countries lived. By challenging his assumptions of difference, he was able to see commonality between the visiting groups and the young Scots involved. He suggested that the young people's experiences of the exchange reached beneath the surface of 'tourist stuff' to develop understanding of difference. Thus, in youth work,

where youth exchanges encourage young people to experience culture and to learn about difference, this could help new ideas and identities to be produced.

In this sense, by experiencing the day to day encounters of life, through hosting or visiting a group of young people from another country, the young people could potentially challenge and change cultural assumptions in order to create new understandings of the world.

I also observed a youth exchange meeting and joined in nine café conversations, of between five to ten minutes each, when the young people were talking about the exchanges and the people they met, or the processes of preparing for the exchange. During these meetings and café conversations, the young people were encouraged to reflect on historical constructions of identity and to reflect on how they formed their opinions of others, or who they could approach to find out about other countries.

This adds to earlier discussion of social and cultural mixing in this setting by suggesting that this mixing did not simply facilitate learning about difference, it also facilitated identity formation. Engaging in discussions, before, during and after the exchange, enabled young people to make judgments about themselves and to consider how they might use their new understandings to shape their identities and to consider how they could relate to people they encountered, who were not like them:

> During a conversation involving two youth exchange participants, one young person suggested that it might be good to 'exchange' with asylum seekers from another part of Scotland. They said they would try to see if that could be set up. I asked them how they would do that. They said they were unsure but would ask one of the youth workers.

In this way, the youth exchange appeared to enable the young people to reflect on how their experiences influenced their view of others, closer to home. This enabled them to take action for change at both local and international levels. However, regarding the idea to exchange with asylum seekers, there was no evidence that this was even discussed with a youth worker later.

This suggested potential for follow-on work from the youth exchange and for extension into other areas. However, it also suggested that these were not followed through in the setting. In this sense, youth work appeared to operate in a space somewhere between overt action for social change, and the maintenance of existing power relations, where the negotiation of programmes between youth workers and young people were sometimes adult led, but at other times appeared to be led by young people.

Further, when talking about identity and youth culture, Ryan said that his cultural experiences had changed through participation in the youth exchange:

> Youth culture is such a broad term…everyone has their own morals and cultural identity, like…young people have their different views from adults, that comes with them having different experiences…like young people's experiences are different to adults. But it's not really about age…its more your experiences…like my experiences of culture have been changed because of my experiences in [exchange location].
>
> Ryan

This suggested that Ryan understood youth culture as part of a broader cultural identity that could impact on changes in his identity. I asked Ryan to consider what influenced those changes, not what his views became:

> I think time plays a part…because countries change over time…things change, laws change, people change…so how you view something at one point in time changes… as you change over time. You're views of culture and your morals change as you change…I think that's a big influence…like, who I am now is different from the last time you were here…yeah?
>
> Ryan

This suggested that Ryan had a clear perception of change as it happened in life and in society. There appeared to be many contributory factors in how culture and identity were formed, and in how these might be socially

constructed. This led me to examine the social mix inside the setting, where friendships were reported as strong and appeared to over-ride influences that existed outside of the peer-group. When talking about a homeless friend, Craig suggested:

> Nowadays your friends are your family. Do you know what I mean? I've got a pal that's just, he's got nowhere to live so he had to go to [Named homeless accommodation]…my mum says stay away from him and I was like, no way, this is the one time when he needs me, because he's without a home. He's been my friend for years and I would never leave him. Never…it's just, your pal's…they're your family.
>
> Craig

This suggested that, for Craig, peer-group and friendship were as important, or maybe more so in some circumstances, than family. In relation to this study, this suggested that social mixing might help sustain relations of love, care and solidarity as a key dimension of equality (Baker et al, 2004). By 'starting where young people are starting' (Davies, 2005, p. 11), their initial interest in making friends and participating in youth exchange visit, shifted towards a wider response to the young people's community and cultural identities.

A conclusion from this analysis is that the international youth exchange offered a variety of possibilities for young people to learn about difference and also about themselves and their formation of identity.

7.2.6 Talking about decision making at the youth council

The literature review identified that if young people are to be included as full citizens the dominant discourses that locate them as outside of society, and subject to adult control, need to be challenged. This section shows how, through participating in the youth council the young people suggested a number of ways for this to happen.

Carole's experiences of the youth council show the complexities of power relations in the setting. Carol claimed that the youth council meant young people were able to make a difference to their own lives and those of other young people:

> I became a youth councillor because I wanted to make a difference for young people. Through consultations and stuff like that, not just me individually but as a whole…we've got leaflets that have got all the e-mail addresses on them and so they [young people] can get in contact with us to find out about meetings…we did surveys across the whole area…we put them in shops…keypad things… asking what they thought the biggest problem was in their area, like anti-social behaviour and stuff like that…what they thought about leisure, if it was too expensive or they had problems getting to it…transport and that…we collated all this information and then put it into the youth strategy.
>
> Carol

Carol became a youth councillor because she believed that consultation informed decision making about the youth strategy development. The strategy was an important document that set out priorities for youth service development over three years for all public and community sector partners in the Local Authority area.

Thus, it appeared that through the youth council, the young people engaged in social and political action that was important in ensuring resources were available to young people across the area. This suggested that, although not overtly aware of the equality of condition perspective, the youth council sought to ensure an equal share of resources and so could be linked to this dimension of equality, which included 'non-financial conditions for their access to goods and services, such as their right to public services…such as a safe and healthy environment…the accessibility of buildings and so on' (Baker et al., 2004, p. 36).

Yet, Carol was also aware of how adults were powerful in determining possibilities. She was aware that consultations were often driven by the interests of specific partner agencies:

> [consultation] was through different departments of like the council and like, the police and health.
>
> Carol

Carol used policy specific language, for example, in describing one of the consultation interests as ‘anti-social behaviour’, she adopted language that was often associated with a discourse that saw young people as a problem or ‘nearly’ adult:

> Erm, I remember...we had a Youth Council meeting and we weren’t allowed...because we didn’t have an adult worker even though a lot of us were over eighteen.
>
> Carol

The young people, who were experienced youth councillors, wanted the meeting to go ahead but were told it could not because there was no youth worker available to provide adult support. Thus, despite a supportive intention, the locus of power and decision taking was retained by adult workers. The young people complained but did not challenge this decision or feel empowered to convene the meeting themselves. This seemed to reinforce conformity and young people appeared reliant on, and contained by, controlling youth workers. I asked Carol how she felt about the cancellation:

> Just as if they didn’t trust us…’cause we’re young people. I don’t know why it was cancelled maybe it’s the law or something, or a health and safety thing and a worker needed to be there in case anything happened. I don’t think that was fair ‘cause half of us were over eighteen, so they could have trusted us more.
>
> Carol

Carol's comment suggested there was no clear reason or explanation as to why a routine meeting was cancelled due to staff absence. Further, she believed that, being over eighteen, this meant she and her friends were not trusted. This called into question the basis on which those potentially powerful collaborative relationships were grounded and the authenticity of the young people's role as youth councilors.

Thus, while offering this as a positive example of how young people were included or consulted, it could also be taken as a further example of Gramscian hegemony in perpetuating a negative discourse that does not challenge power inequalities or a lack of respect and recognition.

Conversely, the youth council also showed that young people were involved and participated in decision-making which helped them to plan services that affected them. Youth councillor's suggested that involvement in youth work was also about citizenship:

> The Youth Council got me a lot more involved in stuff and I don't think I'd be the same if I didn't do it. Erm, I've got a lot more friends, like met a lot more people…and it's got me a lot more involved in like citizenship and stuff like that, you know.
>
> Joan

Joan believed that she would not be the same person if she had not become a youth councillor. This suggested a benefit from participating in youth work that added value in transforming her life by enabling her to become involved and introducing her to a wider circle of friends. I asked what she meant by citizenship:

> Erm, just kinda… including us in decisions and stuff and getting you like…kinda integrated as a group and stuff…and meeting other people and…I don't know… just including you in stuff.
>
> Joan

Joan hinted that participating in the youth council gave her a clearer understanding of her role as a citizen. Yet, her indecisiveness indicated that perhaps she used the word 'citizenship' without really knowing what it meant. This could further exemplify use of language to create discourse if the idea of citizenship had come from youth workers. Yet, Ryan also exemplified citizenship activity without reference to special language to describe this:

> In the youth council…its like, the workers…they're like…its quite equal between us and them, 'cause you discuss things with them... they don't just decide what they're going to do, they involve you…you get to make decisions…if people have arguments you get to hear everyone's point of view…you're not doing it in a harsh way
>
> Ryan

Ryan suggested that his relationship with youth workers was 'quite equal' and that to different perspectives were discussed appropriately and 'not in a harsh way'. This suggested a power sharing relationship between young people and youth workers where detailed collaborations at different and often crucial levels of strategic planning, were important in service development:

> We worked on the whole agenda, what we wanted for the Youth Strategy…this is the third one that we've done, and good stuff came out of it, like erm…there's more volunteer awards and in rural areas, they got more buses, a better bus services put on for them…and stuff.
>
> Carol

The above extract suggests that young people were in control, to an extent, when they were planning and making decisions in areas such as health, housing and community safety. Youth councilors also undertook extensive consultations, leading to development of a new strategy for young people that was presented to partner agencies and key stakeholders in the area who appeared to take action on the basis of their recommendations.

Apart from three occasions over the duration of the fieldwork phase of this study, when meetings were cancelled due to staff absence, the young people reported that the youth council was based on trusting collaborative relationships. They were encouraged to become involved in strategic decision-making and to undertake consultations in schools and youth projects. This suggested a collaborative relationship between youth workers, young people and strategic others, where power sharing was an important aspect of youth work and the collaborative nature of practice.

In thinking about the 'checkpoints along the way' (Davies, 2005, p. 19) to show youth work as distinct from other kinds of work with young people, participation in the youth council also provided evidence of three characteristics in Davies' Manifesto.

First, the young people participated in the youth council voluntarily because they could be involved in decision-making that they believed made a difference. Second, the youth council work was developed over a prolonged period, and suggested that Davies' thinking on the need for youth work to be negotiated as a longer term strategy was apparent. Third, the importance of Davies' argument for 'building trusting relationships based on mutual respect' (Davies, 2005, p. 9) was evident in the trusting and collaborative relationships among youth councilors and the workers who supported the youth council.

7. 3 Five dimensions of equality in this youth work setting

This chapter has suggested that the young people involved in this study perceived and experienced equality in terms of age, ability, culture and gender. Their view of the setting incorporated conceptualisations of equality as human rights, equal opportunities and equality of condition. The equality of condition framework (Baker et al., 2004) was used in this study to examine young people's participation in decision making and it appeared that involvement in various projects or programmes in youth work did bring changes both inside and outside of the setting.

For example, the young people contributed to changes in area-wide youth policy and also questioned their own identities. This suggested that at a micro-level social change was possible to a limited extent because the dimensions of equality as proposed by Baker et al., (2004), were present in some programme areas, but it was not possible all of them. The remainder of this section adds to this chapter summary by showing how each of the five dimensions of equality as proposed by Baker et al. (2004) appeared to be evident in this setting.

Respect and Recognition Dimension

There were many examples of how young people appeared to perceive and experience equality in terms of the respect and recognition dimension in the setting. This included being challenged regularly about stereotyping or inappropriate use of language and a consideration of cultural diversity through the international youth exchange. Critical inter-culturalism was practised in the café through social mixing, conversation and dialogue. This helped young people to scrutinise their ideas and to examine complex and contested issues.

Equality of Resources

The young people experienced equality of resources through participation in the youth council, which informed strategic level planning priorities and resourcing youth services. By volunteering young people supported activities which helped create a fair share of resources. For example, by consulting on access and availability of leisure facilities, the youth council influenced changes in provision of services to rural areas and by volunteering in the café, the young people contributed to the development of a resource for others.

Thus in the dimension of resources, there was evidence of young people acting to bring about changes in the allocation and availability of resources. Their involvement in the youth council extended the range of resources that were available to meet their needs, which in turn, enhanced their prospects for well-being and benefited young people who did not participate in youth services, including those who were unaware of the youth council consultation processes.

Love, Care and Solidarity

A strong relationship of trust between young people and workers helped to form bonds that united them and appeared to be a critical factor in promoting equality in this setting. The young people said these relationships were different to those they experienced elsewhere and were loving and caring, in the sense that there were ample possibilities for warm, supportive and nurturing relationships to develop in the youth work setting, which could enhance other parts of their lives. Acting together, young people and youth workers supported each other and did something for others, in addition to supporting themselves through caring, being appreciated and fostering feelings of belonging. According to Baker et al., these are, 'vital components of what enables people to lead successful lives and [as] an expression of our fundamental interdependence' (Baker et al., 2004, p 37).

Power

Drawing conclusions about the equality of power dimension was more complex. While the young people experienced inequality in terms of adult power, for example, when youth council meetings were cancelled or in their identification of a specific staff member as, 'the boss', yet, there was also evidence of their empowerment. The young people suggested that involvement in decision making, strategic planning and peer education demonstrated, in some instances, that power was tipped in their favour. This suggested that traditional power relations between adults and young people were sometimes disrupted in this setting. There was also a level of autonomy that meant young people were empowered as agents of change, across a range of decision making and participation processes.

However, in addressing dimensions of power and equality, the DSG exemplified shifts in power that facilitated access to resources and loving and caring relationships, yet appeared not to address particular issues of gender. Locating the DSG in this generic setting, enabled social integration that was a positive development in engaging young people and in challenging disability

discrimination, but the young women in the group felt discriminated against, on grounds of gender, by the lack of fitness opportunities for them.

This suggested that although the dimension of power was sometimes examined in this setting, the balance of power was not always tipped in the young people's favour. This was particularly evident where double discrimination was experienced by young women who felt discriminated against because they were both female and disabled. This called into question the basis on which the conditions of power were created among young disabled women. Nor was there evidence to suggest that gendering of sport and fitness activity was specific to the DSG, which highlighted a need for further research in this area.

Working and Learning

Finally, the working and learning dimension of equality was also evident in the experiences of young people who said they learned about equality by participating in youth exchanges, the DSG and in a range of other youth work programmes. These offered a number of possibilities for self-development that were consistent with this dimension of equality.

Chapter summary

Taken together, this chapter has responded to the research question by identifying how young people perceived and experienced the dimensions of equality. I have illustrated where these dimensions persisted in this setting and suggested that, sometimes facilitated social change, in terms of young people's power relationships and understandings of the world.

Yet, in responding to the question of what young people learned about equality in youth work, I also needed to examine how youth work contributed to these dimensions for equality and whether this could be argued as enabling young people, in this setting, to learn about equality. Having examined the young people's experiences and perceptions of equality, I needed to consider whether their experiences in the setting facilitated learning about equality. This is discussed in detail in chapter eight.

8 How young people appeared to learn about equality in the youth work setting

Chapter Outline

Chapter seven examined the young people's experiences and perceptions about equality in order to consider how they made sense of the concept of equality and how they experienced it in this setting. This chapter builds on analysis of those experiences by examining how young people learned about equality in youth work. Primarily, it is concerned with how young people's learning was facilitated in this youth work setting, which in turn suggested how this helped them to learn about equality. The chapter applies two of Davies' characteristics (engaging with new and challenging experiences and working through existing peer networks) to address research question three: Does youth work, as practised in this setting, help young people to learn about equality? The chapter responds to this question on two levels.

First, it shows how young people learned through conversation, dialogue and through cross cultural and social interaction. Next, the chapter discusses how young people appeared to learn by engaging in experiential, problem-posing and transformative learning. Finally, the chapter examines how the young people's relationships, with each other and with youth workers changed over time. This demonstrated how loving and caring relationships and respect and recognition (Baker et al, 2004) appeared to underpin the kind of learning that happened in this setting. Together, these findings suggested that educational generic youth work might help young people to learn about equality.

8.1 *How young people appeared to learn about equality through participation in youth work*

This section discusses my observations and what young people said about their learning in this youth work setting to help understand how they learned about equality. Youth work literature has already suggested the importance of

conversation and relationships in engaging with young people to facilitate learning. Taking an informal approach, and building rapport, are suggested as creating possibilities for learning through what is described in youth work literature as conversational dialogue (Batsleer, 2008; Jeffs and Smith, 2010; Spence, 2007).

Applying youth work (Davies, 2005) and equality (Baker et al., 2004) elements from the theoretical framework, adds to literature in two areas. First, by showing that, Davies (2005) characteristics which emphasise the importance of peer networks and the offer of challenging experiences were crucial to development of learning in youth work practice, in this setting. Second, by showing how learning in this generic youth work setting was useful in fostering the respect and recognition and learning and working dimensions of equality (Baker et al., 2004). As before, I applied the logic model to identify impacts that could be assumed as indicative of learning in this setting.

8.1.1 Learning through informal conversation

The café area was a well-used space where real world situations were often the starting point for shifting perspectives, raising consciousness and problem posing:

> I watched Brian playing pool with Susie [youth worker]. In the time it took to play one game, around 20 minutes. Susie asked him how he was coping with a recent problem, what he was doing about finding a job and how the planning for the youth exchange was coming along. Discussion of the problem offered Brian a chance to express his feelings and by asking him more about each of these things, through questioning, listening and seeing his reactions, the youth worker was able to gauge his feelings. Susie also talked about her own experiences of a similar problem and suggested he could talk to her or anyone else if he preferred, now or in future. The job conversation covered options in terms of college, staying on at school, a possible

> apprenticeship and how he felt about his part-time job, as a possible full time option. The youth exchange conversation was about Brian being fed up with having to attend meetings but being reminded of the benefits of taking part in the exchange.

In this field note I observed that in a short time (the game of pool lasted approximately 15 minutes), the youth worker used skills in purposeful conversation and listening, to show empathy and solidarity, to ask questions that prompted Brian to consider his options and make the consequences of his decisions visible. This observed conversation included elements of what could be considered as a counselling role in promoting well-being. It was also observed as including careers guidance and discussion of cultural diversity. The extracts suggest that these conversations appeared to help Brian make critical and potentially life-changing decisions about his future employment, his participation in the youth exchange and his life in general.

This kind of conversation, around the pool table or in the café, offered an indication of the impact of generic youth work, and showed its multi-dimensional nature. Every visit to the setting involved me in observing, hearing or joining in with café conversations. I did this either formally, during specific observation periods, or informally as part of my being there to get a feel for the place, which was also part of the study but not formally recorded as observations.

Although I did not initiate any of these conversations, my being there did change them. For example, conversations could be curtailed because young people did not want me to hear or be part of the discussion or, when joining in, I added elements that may not otherwise be included. I was conscious to the possibility of directing or dominating discussion and deliberately tried not to do this, but the extent to which I achieved this is doubtful because even a throw away comment, or a nod in agreement, could direct conversation. However, to the best of my ability, I sought to engage with young people in their conversations and to limit the impact of my presence.

The conversations I observed covered a range of topics such as personal problems or wider issues, and the consequences of young people's actions inside the setting or at home, in school or in work:

> I heard Nik ask [worker] for a reference for a job in [local shop]. He [worker] immediately said he'd be happy to do the reference, and spent a few minutes asking abut the job, and what he'd be doing there…after a short time the worker wished him well in his application and suggested that if he gets an interview, he could do a mock interview…Nik said that would be good.

This extract showed how a quick conversation about a job reference was used to create a learning opportunity for Nik to improve his skills in interview techniques. This was not pre planned or offered to a group of young people as a job-finding programme, it simply used the conversation as the starting point for one-to-one learning that responded to Nik's pending interview. In this sense, the offer was made in response to a new and challenging situation that Nik was encountering at that time and which could also help him in the future.

I found out later that Nik met with the worker for over an hour to go over questions and do a 'mock' interview. I did not observe this but spoke to both Nik and the worker who said it went well, and Nik said it was helpful in knowing what to expect, preparing answers and building his confidence. I found out later that Nik got the job but left three weeks later because he didn't like the work involved! The worker told me that, she had a long conversation with Nik about why he left so soon. She now believed that he would be more discerning about future job applications.

In this sense, applying a logic model to this scenario it could be assumed that both a series of conversations and a mock interview provided learning about preparing for an interview. When added to Nik's existing skills this could be assumed as helping him to get a job. Despite the outcome of leaving the job, it could be suggested that Nik learned new skills that again, could be assumed, might be useful in future.

Dewey (1938) has suggested that without reflecting on learning and the consequences of action taken, the process of doing something is reduced to mere activity. By encouraging Nik to think about his reasons for applying for the job, putting such effort into his preparation for the interview and his subsequent departure within three weeks, this worker added an opportunity for reflection on what happened, in order to learn more from the experience than simply how to 'do' an interview.

Ord (2009) has further suggested this subsequent reflective element is critical to understanding the educational basis for youth work. While Davies (2005) has argued that youth workers need to carefully judge and negotiate their access to young people to ensure that learning is an affirming experience and is transferrable to other settings. Davies (2005) also emphasises that the starting point for learning is the young person and that youth work should incorporate elements of fun and relaxation.

This starting point was shown in another observed conversation in the café that was often interspersed with fun and laughter:

> Sat with Sandra's group, all young women and [worker], the usual chat…they were at someone's flat at the weekend...the conversation was about being drunk and included lots of laughing and talking about young men and what they (the young women at the table) did. The worker joined in by talking of her own experiences of going to friend's houses and her own relationships, when she was younger. This brought more laughter, and more story telling.
>
> Several times [the worker] turned the conversation round to informally ask about feelings and whether they thought something was acceptable or not. The conversation included serious topics such as memory loss, relationships, petty theft and exclusion. At one point people were laughing so hard, some had tears in their eyes and there was a running joke around stories about a chocolate orange…but you had to be there to really get it.

This extract demonstrates that café conversations were often led by young people but steered towards informal learning by youth workers. In this sense, a fun filled social exchange became an opportunity for learning that was based on young people's peer friendships and shifted by skilful and focussed youth worker intervention towards a thought provoking, informal exchange of ideas and stories about life. Again, I was mindful of striking a balance been contributing to the conversation and yet not overly directing discussion. However, as before, being present and involved in this conversation meant that I was both inside and outside of the setting, and as such did add to conversations.

However, rather than positioning myself as outside of the ebb and flow of conversations, the ethnographic approach to this study, suggested that I should observe young people inside settings that were as naturally occurring as possible. In this sense, sharing a joke or conversation in the café contributed to the creation of rapport through, what Blackman (2007) called 'friendship moments' (p. 703). This helped to establish a connection with the young people and the setting that otherwise might have taken longer to develop. Glesne (1989) has also suggested that establishing rapport is critical in ethnographic research because it helps foster mutual understanding and respect.

My observations also suggested that rather than simply joining conversations, the educational focus of this generic setting meant that youth workers persisted in asking questions that turned a chance conversation into a peer learning opportunity. Sometimes, as in the extract above, café learning was about sharing stories that heightened emotions, while at other times learning was about attending to, or playing down, emotions:

> Ali is moving away to Wales, anxious, not knowing anyone…[worker] suggested sussing out youth groups in her new location and also boosted her confidence by reminding her that when she first arrived here she knew no one but quickly made friends…her mood lightened and the talk turned to more positive aspects of the move.

In this extract, the youth worker intervention helped alleviate Ali's negative feelings about moving home. By talking about and reflecting on her experiences of arriving in the youth work setting and then focussing on the positive aspects of moving, Ali was able to reflect on her feelings and review here position. Again, by applying logic model, this observation could assume that this process of reflection and review helped Ali to learn how to turn negativity into positivity that 'creates experiential learning opportunities that confirm or correct initial expectations' Fredrickson and Losada (2005, p. 679).

These observed snippets of conversation illustrate the kind of routine conversations that happened every time the café area was open. Some led to quite detailed and reflective learning or ongoing support, others were stand alone, and often light-hearted, conversations.

By engaging in informal conversation with youth workers, my observations suggested that the young people also learned about a wide range of social and life skills:

> There was a bit of an argument between a young woman and young man around the television about whether to watch the football or Corrie. Adam [youth worker] intervened, initially to ask them to calm down, but then, when the young woman suggested that football was for boys and that they could already play football in the games hall, Adam suggested that girls play, and are interested in football too. This led to a ten minute, three-way conversation that helped the young people to unpack gender stereotyping and for a while the television argument was forgotten. By the end of this conversation, the football match had reached half-time, and the young woman's friends had arrived so she wasn't bothered about watching television.

This observation recorded an intervention that helped the young people to practice skills in making a case for their preferred viewing channel, and they also discussed gender stereotyping. This extract showed how a situation that could have become confrontational was diffused and was turned into a learning opportunity.

Most of these conversations were short-term or one-off learning encounters. They were not part of a prescribed curriculum yet, over time and taken together, they suggested how a cumulative growth in understanding and knowledge was achieved by young people who engaged in the youth work setting. Thus, in addition to the young people's experiences of equality that were discussed in chapter seven, learning about equality also appeared to be developed through informal conversation:

> I joined Sandra, Paula and [youth worker] who were sitting in the café. After an initial catch up they started talking about the youth exchange and how they could find out more about the people and country they were visiting…about five minutes was spent in talking about possible sources of information, such as the internet, library, this included a conversation about a current movie set in the exchange country. Then [Worker] suggested that we all share what they already knew so five minutes was spent in conversation about what we knew…some information was dubious and some based on stereotypes [worker] challanged these by asking how we knew these things and how we would feel if a stereotype was applied to us. A further 15 -20 minutes was spent in unpacking those and included a conversation about stereotyping, that initially included joke-like comments and ended in an agreement that it was wrong to use base judgements on stereotypes and [worker] asked if this should be discussed at the next exchange meeting. Paula and Sandra said it should.

In this observation I outline how an informal conversation about a youth exchange led to a discussion on stereotyping and a decision to discuss this further at a subsequent meeting. The conversation was started by young people and developed by the youth worker, who appeared to maximise an opportunity for impromptu informal learning.

Applying the logic model assumed that by learning about stereotypes through conversations in youth work, the young people could take forward this knowledge to any future stereotypical encounters.

In addition to using informal methods, the short time period for conversations appeared helpful in sustaining conversations. The café is a social space were young people hang out with their friends, not where they intentionally go to learn. Thus, short bursts of learning through conversation, of about 10 - 30 minutes seemed to work best in this space. When I observed shorter conversations, these did not shift beyond superficial or passing remarks and there were no obvious connections to learning. Some time was needed to move conversations forward and consider a range of response. Yet, any longer than 30 minutes and the young people appeared to switch off or end conversations by changing the subject or moving away.

This may indicate that they resented this kind of intrusion into what they regarded as their social space or simply that they had lost interest in the topic. However, this was never discussed, instead conversations just shifted as in any social setting from one topic to another. Thus, youth workers needed to use skill and judgement on when to develop specific conversations further and when to let them go or decide to return to the topic another time.

Routinely, I observed youth workers engaging in conversations that were problem posing and maximised opportunities for learning through dialogue. During the two and a half years when I undertook field work for this study, I observed or overheard many short burst learning conversations. By that I mean that workers maximised even the shortest periods of conversation, to promote learning and critical thinking. I also observed conversations that could perhaps have gone on longer but were stopped for a variety of reasons, such as a friend arriving or leaving the setting, a worker being called away.

Workers sometimes suggested the topic of conversation could be continued by joining a particular group and so, I assumed that conversation could be returned to later. Indeed workers told me that they often spent weeks discussing an ongoing topic with one person, as an iterative process. This was perceived by the young people as persistence, for example, someone told me that a particular worker was ‘always going on about that with me’ and another even suggested he was ‘fed-up’ with a persistent conversation that one worker

engaged him in. Both instances were about how the young person's behaviour was viewed by others in the setting which the worker was keen to challenge.

Thus, in addition to quite detailed short burst discussions, some of these became what might be called serial conversations over a prolonged period of days or weeks. There were also one-off thought provoking one-liners, used by youth workers to stimulate thinking, such as 'Why do you think that? Is that always something you do? Can you imagine another way of thinking about/doing that …[topic]? Do youth think that's fair? These one-liners were used to stimulate conversation yet sustain an informal learning environment.

Using conversation to stimulate thinking and develop learning in the café, computing room and other parts of the setting, also meant that peer groups and peer networks were maintained as the starting point for learning. The young people said this was different from other settings they encountered and so implied that youth work was set apart from other social and learning settings they engaged in elsewhere.

There were also different outcomes to, what appeared to be, similar conversations and different responses from different members of staff:

> Craig and Eric [Youth worker] were playing pool and chatted about the game they were playing. Eric asked Craig how his part time job was going, and Craig said he'd left. Eric asked what happened. Craig said he couldn't be bothered, but that now he was 'skint'. Eric said it was a shame things didn't work out and the focus of their discussion returned to the pool game.

Observing this conversation at the pool table led me to consider why Eric, whom I had seen responding differently in other situations by asking probing questions yet, in this instance, did not take the conversation further. I wondered if Eric was using his professional judgement and knowledge of Craig to know when to intervene and when to leave the door open for later intervention, yet maintaining his relationship with young people. However, when I asked him later, Eric said he hadn't been conscious of this and that he

had simply decided to focus on the game as part of his ongoing relationship with Craig. I revised my interpretation of this extract to a social encounter between youth worker and young person.

Reflecting my observations, not all conversations were used to facilitate learning and conversations were not always positive. Workers sometimes resorted to telling, or instructing young people. For example, in two situations I witnessed conversations where, despite youth worker intervention, the young people continued to use discriminating language or make offensive remarks. In those instances, the young people involved were asked to leave the setting. However, the young people who were reprimanded usually modified their language following discussion with a youth worker.

In this setting, youth work appeared to facilitate learning through informal conversation in the café area and other parts of the setting, where critical conversation was encouraged. In the café, young people and workers engaged in challenging and thought provoking conversations that included pre-planned issue-based work and impromptu conversations between 10 and 30 minutes that were more naturally occurring. These often started with casual encounters that were turned into critical learning opportunities and were often enhanced by cross-cultural and social interaction.

8.1.2 Talking about learning through cross-cultural and social interaction

The young people provided information that suggested their learning was embedded in social and cultural interaction, as Carol suggested:

> You get to meet all kinds of different people [in here] and you mix with people you wouldn't normally mix with because they come here too…like people with disabilities…I think it makes you more socially aware…it's just like, gender and age…and…like neds or grungy types but it doesn't really matter cause everyone just comes up and mixes with everyone else.

Sandra also commented:

> Like, coming up here, you learn to respect people and they give respect back and you speak your mind…interact with different people…but if you were outside and you saw someone...you would have walked passed and you wouldn't have wanted to talk to them because they're different but in a way they're still the same as us…coming here teaches you how to communicate with people outwith your own group…people who have different styles or like, live in different ways grungers or emos.

These extracts show that both Carol and Sandra believed that, in this setting, young people learned about respect through interacting with people who would otherwise not mix together. By encouraging communication and integration across different social and cultural groups, it appeared that for Carol and Sandra youth work facilitated elements of boundary crossing.

Respect has already been shown as important in Ryan's formation of relationships and as a benefit of engaging in youth work. Respect was suggested by the young people in this study when they were asked to define equality and now this idea of integration is indicative of how, in some instances, boundary crossing could lead to increased social and cultural awareness and in doing so, foster respect.

Both Carol and Sandra implied that their experience of boundary crossing inside youth work was different to outside of the setting. This suggested that in this setting, youth work could offer potential for boundary crossing. This suggestion was vindicated in Ali's response to being asked if anything in the setting prompted her to think about equality:

> People come from all different backgrounds, you know, em, well you've got people who are like working, em, what I call…like normal families, living with a mum and dad…and then there are other people who are like, from care homes and…they would be taught different things…their attitudes towards things would be different…and the way they value things would be different too...like, some people get it on a plate, whereas people in homes only get a certain amount of

> things and have to share it…it's a different way of working so I'm sure they are going to value things more…than others.
>
> Ali

Prior to attending youth work, Ali did not know anyone living in care and so her understanding of difference and her perception of equality was impacted by coming to the youth work setting.

Fiona also valued coming to youth work because of the support she believed she gained from friends and making new friends:

> I think coming up here means that you get to know more people… you get to make friends and that… it's good to have friends, around you, 'cause it means if you want to talk to someone about something you can speak to them.
>
> Fiona

This suggested that in this setting young people could meet and make new friends who, for Fiona, were an important part of her peer support network. Peer support has also been identified by Davies (2005) as an important characteristic in thinking about learning in youth work.

The importance of peer networks and other relationships also appeared to be a caltalyst for learning about equality in my observations of the setting. During conversations in the café, internet room, rehearsal studio and arts room, youth worker intervention challenged young people, in their peer groups whenever an issue arose that was potentially discriminating, these were challenged. This included for example, youth workers and some young people confronting the use of negative stereotypes, name calling, joke telling and also asking young people to consider the impact of their behaviour and use of language:

> Sandra was pulled up for saying, 'they're gay' to signify her view of a local band as rubbish. Claire [youth worker] said that wasn't acceptable, and asked how she knew the people in the band were gay.

> Sandra said she didn't and that they probably weren't. Claire asked Sandra why she used that expression as a 'put down'. Sandra said that everyone used it but she didn't know why really. She called a friend over to verify that it was what 'everybody' would say.
>
> This interaction led to a ten-minute conversation involving the worker and the two young people about why it was inappropriate to use the word 'gay' to describe something they disliked. The worker asked about other words that were used in this derogatory and discriminating way and this led to discussion of the words 'black' and 'white' as describing 'evil' and 'good' things in life. Sometimes the young people made jokes and would laugh at their own ideas about this use of language but [Claire] just kept coming back to challenge them and ask how they would like to be described, or how they would feel being described in that way.
>
> As in other examples, Claire moved the conversation forward by asking the young people to consider how upsetting this use of discriminating language, would be to other people. The conversation turned to discussing respect and being treated in the way you would like to be treated. Two of the young people said that they had never really thought about this before. The other said she had thought about it but because all of her friends used this kind of language she found it hard not to. She said she would be viewed as a 'geek' if she pulled her friends up about it. All three agreed and repeatedly said that it didn't mean anything but then conceded that if someone was hurt or offended then actually they could see why it was wrong. The conversation ended without reaching any conclusion when three other people arrived and the worker withdrew from the space, saying, 'we can talk about this another time, but I hope it's helped you to think a bit'. The three involved said that it had.

It was interesting to see how quickly the young people responded to the youth worker's challenge. After the initial approach, they appeared to use humour as a way of deflecting the criticism. The worker accommodated some initial

joking which seemed to help maintain a relaxed atmosphere but she quickly adopted a questioning and challenging tone, and then, connected with the young people to discuss the pros and cons of using such language.

According to Davies (2005), while other professional and ideological positions have focused on the individual and have taken a negative view of groups of young people, in youth work peer networks and experiences with peers are known to be important in young people's lives. This means that youth workers understand the need to negotiate engagement and learning with young people in ways that are acceptable their peer group.

The youth workers in this setting suggested that conversations in the café were built around this premise. Thus, learning about difference was often developed through peer group and peer led conversation, where there was no specific programme or announcement about equality work. Yet, the opportunity for learning was seized by a youth worker who, on overhearing the use of disparaging language, developed a learning conversation about the importance of language and how it can be used to perpetuate prejudice and discrimination, which was not acceptable and not tolerated in the youth work setting.

Taken together the young people's perspectives and my observations inside the setting, suggested that learning about equality was facilitated in peer groups, where youth workers confronted any unacceptable use of language or put downs. The young people also suggested that learning about equality was facilitated through social interaction across cultural boundaries and in conversations where young people mixed with young people that they would otherwise not socialise with, outside of the setting.

These findings reflected Davies (2005) assertion that learning should recognise and work through young people's peer networks and also with Baker et al. (2004) who suggest that respect and recognition are important dimensions in achieving equality of condition. This was achieved through informal conversational dialogue (Batsleer, 2008). However, learning could also be demonstrated in analysis of their experiences, which they claimed were transformative and is discussed in the following section.

8.2 How young people's learning about equality was demonstrated in the setting

The previous section examined the importance of peer interactions in conversations and in crossing social and cultural boundaries. Yet, Davies (2005) has also suggested a requirement for practice to move beyond where young people are starting 'by encouraging them to be outward looking, critical and creative in their responses to their experience and the world around them' (Davies, 2005, p. 16). Thus, it was useful to examine findings about how young people responded to their experiences in youth work in order to learn about equality. It was also interesting to consider the extent to which young people's learning might bring a new response to the world around them when they talked about how their lives were changed. I draw on three widely known theorists who are often cited in youth work literature as critical to understanding the process of learning to youth work settings. This section is developed in two parts.

First, I used Dewey's (1938) conceptualisation of experiential learning and Freire's (1972) theory of problem-posing education, both of which appeared to be used in this setting by some youth workers to facilitate learning. Second, I used Mezirow's (2009) theory of transformative learning to examine claims that young people made about how their lives were transformed by coming to youth work which suggested that their world view changed through participation in youth work programmes.

This section argues that experiential learning was used together with problem-posing to help young people learn about equality and in doing so it appeared that some young people did engage in learning that could be identified as transformative in helping them to change their perceptions of themselves and of other young people. There was some evidence to suggest that generic youth work facilitated learning opportunities for young people to become outward looking, critical and creative, in developing their learning about equality.

8.2.1 Talking about experiential learning in this setting

Dewey (1938) suggests that education as socialisation is a partial process when isolated from the range of possible social interests that combine to create shared democratic purpose. Dewey also suggests that experience was not only about trying or doing something; rather experience was about undergoing as a process of acting on what we have tried or done and by reflecting on it, we change: 'when the change made by action is reflected back into a change made in us…we learn something' (Dewey, 1938, p. 163).

Ord (2009) has affirmed the importance of Dewey's work in shifting a view of youth work from simply providing a set of discrete activities towards a more reflective educative process, suggesting that 'youth work is…more accurately described with reference to the theory of experiential learning provided by Dewey…[where]…it is not experience as something "other", which is provided additionally by the educators, but experience as the life experience of the participants' (Ord, 2009, p. 506). Thus, without reflection on how an experience fits with the wider social and cultural life of the learner, and on the consequences or changes this brings in their world view, experience is reduced to an act that, as found in literature, may be confused with leisure activity (Banks, 2010).

The young people talked about how their experiences of youth work changed as they got older:

> This year it…[the youth exchange]…was in Scotland, so it was in Blahville and we did all the different things together, but because they're all a wee bit older and we were like weans running about under their feet…we needed to like…mature a wee bit and like, act grown up...and then take more responsibility for our actions...like if you get into trouble... then you need to be like, right put your hands up...my fault.
>
> Sandra

Sandra suggested that her experiences of the youth exchange helped her to widen her world view. Her experiences of socialising and participating in programmes with a slightly older visiting group, challenged here expectations or assumptions about the world and encouraged her to try new ways of being. Sandra's sense of what it meant to be 'mature' was shaped by her life outside of youth work. Yet drawing on her new experiences in the youth exchange she was able to reflect on her behaviour and to decide on steps she could take to bring about change.

In some instances the youth worker who supported the exchange prompted her to reflect critically. For example, Sandra told me a lengthy story of how this worker intervened during a particular event when she and a friend were 'trying it on' to see how far they could go with their behaviour. In this sense, experiential learning in youth work appeared to model Dewey's position that, having participated in a specific activity, this facilitated a period of reflection about how this experience could be applied in the social world of the learner, and then to undergo change as a consequence of that reflection, which could be described as learning.

Rather than offer discrete 'experiences' as learning in themselves, youth work appeared to offer these experiences to help mobilise young people's use of their existing resources and social or cultural understandings, in order to learn through reflecting on their experiences in the context of their own lives and undergoing change as a result of that reflective process. Thus, as suggested in literature, learning is a process rather than content or product driven paradigm and Dewey's ideas about transactions of 'trying' and 'undergoing' were evident in Sandra's learning: trying new things, relationships, roles; undergoing change in relation to the world, taking on new adult roles.

Later in the same interview, Sandra also suggested youth work as a place where opportunities for trying and undergoing were prolific:

> If this place wasn't open... I would just be hanging about with like my kind. I know that sounds really bad...people like me…I wouldn't get

> to know them…but because I'm in here…you start talking to them…get to know them. And they're not just wee Grungers or Emos or whatever they are. They are actually me...in different clothing. Well, obviously not me but...like me…just dressed differently.
>
> Sandra

This extract demonstrates how Sandra's experiences in youth work prompted her to think critically and reflect on how people from different cultural groups were not so different. She questioned her existing construction of herself which was developed in the wider social world, and suggested that by looking outward from that position and getting to know people who were different, she took a more critical perspective and saw herself as closer to those she had previously identified as very different.

This changed perspective was not always directly linked to youth worker intervention, but rather to her experiences of equality as a value base in youth work. Those experiences appeared to mobilise Sandra's use of existing resources for critical reflection. As she developed increasing awareness of difference, this seemed to help her to build a wider and outward looking frame of reference on which to base judgements and decisions about difference.

Sandra suggested that she had learned to appreciate similarities, despite differences, and this appeared to build her capacity to change perspective. This suggested a critical response to those experiences that shifted beyond her initial starting point for involvement in youth work and reflected Dewey's view of experiences as undergoing action that changes the person, in light of their experiences.

Taking action for change, could also be suggested as a creative response to those experiences, rather than a passive response that could have meant she was more aware but did not use this understanding to create a new world view. Together, Sandra's comments show that, in this setting, Davies characteristic for an outward looking, critical and creative response was possible. This possibility also appeared in Carole's view of a trip to Alton Towers:

> When we went to Alton Towers, there was lots of different people, all the different groups…like the music group were all grungy people and a bit older, and then there were the younger ones, and the disability group and the drama group that is mostly girls…but everyone came together for the trip to Alton Towers…like…you get to meet people and you realise that they are just the same, except that maybe they have a disability…you think more about how you judge other people and try to make sure that you don't get it wrong in future…it makes you more aware of how alike people are.

This extract shows how her experiences of a trip to Alton Towers helped Carole to take a wider, outward looking perspective on different social and cultural groups. This perspective meant Carole was able to critically reflect on her earlier judgements of people and to consider how she might respond differently in future. The trip to Alton Towers was promoted as a fun experience. Yet, Carole's experiences of the Alton Towers Trip led to a questioning of her own perspectives and appeared to develop a more creative response. This learning process incorporated an active experiential element that was linked to participation in the Alton Towers trip but learning was developed through critical reflection on her experiences which led Carole to reframe her world view and undergo a change in thinking. Therefore, again, this followed Dewey's conceptualisation of experiential learning.

These were not isolated examples but I needed to discuss them in some detail to show that although not happening all of the time, there were elements of experiential learning happening in this youth work setting. Further, these extracts suggested that this kind of experiential learning underpinned development of learning that supported Davies assertion that youth work should seek to move young people beyond their initial starting point by encouraging them to become outward looking, critical and creative. These findings suggest potential for experiential learning to be utilised in generic youth work settings in order to move young people beyond their initial starting point in thinking about equality.

While these examples provided evidence of experiential learning involving the young people themselves drawing on their own resources to develop learning, this was not always the case. Often, the youth worker acted as a stimulus for experiential learning and for encouraging the initial reflection that shifted experiences from simple activity to a reflective educative process.

8.2.2 Talking about problem-posing learning

The literature review has already identified how critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970;1976) underpinned some youth work developments in the United Kingdom. In rejecting the banking concept of education, Freire proposed a problem-posing concept of education that responds to real problems people face and involves 'a constant unveiling of reality…and the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality' Freire (2009, p. 57). Problem-posing education sees people as always becoming, always incomplete and as such, is an on-going and dynamic activity where 'education is the practice of freedom – as opposed to education as the practice of domination' (2009, p. 57).

In thinking about learning in youth work, a problem-posing education as the practice of freedom would appear consistent with Davies' call for youth work to see and respond to young people as themselves and not through 'pre-set labels' (Davies, 2005, p. 18). Thus, it was interesting to find out the extent to which problem-posing learning impacted on the young people's experiences and perceptions of equality in this youth work setting.

In this setting, youth workers routinely took time to explain the why and how of situations or problems. They routinely asked critical questions, rather than answering a question with their own opinion or taking an 'official' line. Instead of issuing statements claiming knowledge or giving instruction, my observations suggest they used interpersonal skills, positive language, problem-posing and supportive dialogue to help maintain good relations:

> Sam was quite agitated early on, not sure why…[worker] went over and overheard him saying his day had been pretty rubbish too but that

> doing something else helped him to feel better…he challenged her to a game of pool and this lightened Sam's mood…within five minutes she appeared to have forgotten what was upsetting her.

This extract outlines a typical kind of encounter that I observed many times. These encounters involved a worker in identifying a potential problem and taking immediate action to diffuse a situation. This routinely involved a combination of sharing personal experiences and steering the young person away from the problem. Such encounters also involved problem-posing dialogue:

> Elaine was in computing and annoyed about not being able to access an open web-site to play a game. [Worker] asked her why she thought there was a restriction on internet access. She gave a couple of reasons but suggested that was about other people who wanted to do bad things, when all she wanted was to play a game. [Worker] then explained the limitations of game playing, and also that she could access some games, just not the one she wanted, because of its content, which could be upsetting or harmful to people younger than her. He asked her if she thought that was a good thing or not, whether there should be one ruling for some people but not others. The ensuing conversation ended in a mutual understanding of each other's perspectives with Elaine also conceding that she played the game a lot at home, so what she was doing now was a wee change!

Again, this kind of conversation was typical in this setting, where youth workers reflected the problem back to the young person through questions that encouraged dialogue, rather than a fixed answer. This suggested a problem posing, rather than solution focussed pedagogy, particularly where there were not fixed answers or where the problem was complex.

As suggested in that last section, youth workers appeared to use these skills intuitively during conversations with young people to turn a range of situations or initial conversations into learning opportunities by using a single throw away question.

In deciding whether or not to engage in learning conversations in the café or to respond to the problems posed by youth workers, the young people were active in determining what they did, in the setting. However, there was a distinction between Freirian problem-posing and popular conceptions of problem-solving

In groups with an externally identified purpose, a problem-solving approach is taken, in seeking to address an already identified 'problem' or issue. This kind of programme would include, for example a young carer's group or single parents. Although outwith the scope of this study, such groups were present in the youth work setting but these were not based on peer networks or groups, and tended to identify young people by labels that were applied by people outside of the setting.

This kind of labelling leads to a problem solving approach in order to address needs associated with a particular label. While it may be suggested that young people in those groups are involved in determining some elements of the programme, they are also required or invited to attend, through more formalised routes than simply choosing to drop-in and see what is happening inside the facility.

Thus, distinction between problem-posing pedagogy and problem-solving pedagogy is one of purpose (Freire, 1970;1976; Giroux, 2005). Problem-posing is suggested as an alternative to problem-solving education, in seeking to start where young people are starting instead of preconceived ideas about possible 'correct' answers (Peterson, 2009). Rather than starting with a problem for which a solution is sought, it starts with a more open dialogue that explores what or how a phenomenon might be considered problematic and in doing so, the purpose is to understand why and how this might be the case.

When people are involved in problem-posing dialogue they become conscious to their capacity for learning to read the world differently and to unpack or decode what is happening (Ledwith, 2001). This helps them to decide what action is needed in response to the problems they have identified. This is different from taking a problem-solving approach, where a particular solution

is promulgated, but may not be applicable across a range of contexts and does not bring an understanding of why a problem occurred.

Even where there were conflicting ideas, or the issue or matter at hand might easily have generated conflict, I observed the youth workers in this setting encouraging young people see different perspectives, and to calmly reflect on these, before taking decisions or a particular position.

For example, in an observed encounter, I saw a youth worker engage with a small group of young people who were planning a summer holiday together.

> After some initial conversation about travel and accommodation, [worker] turned the conversation around a range of topics for a period of over fifty minutes. This facilitated the young people's consideration of issues of personal safety, sexual health, relationships with each other and with strangers, agreeing ground rules for the apartment (tidying up, shopping for food and what to take with them).

Although unplanned, this chance conversation was used to turn this encounter into a learning opportunity. Batsleer (2008) has suggested conversation as underpinning practice that connects with young people's personal and wider social interests and that, 'when the conversation moves on from chat to more serious conversation, informal education is part of that power charged process' (Batsleer, 2008, p. 11).

Problem posing pedagogy was also evident in interviews for example, when Joe talked about his experiences of the setting:

> It…[youth work]…gives you a better outlook on how much people really are different and have different understandings of things…like I have different understandings from somebody else and sometimes we'll disagree with each other, then agree about other things at the same time…we get to talk about things up here and to see where we agree or disagree
>
> Joe

The above extract suggested that dialogue was important, and that talking things through facilitated Joe's understanding of difference. Joe attributed this to youth work because it offered a space for dialogue with a group of people who had a different 'outlook' to his own. This appeared to suggest that young people didn't always agree with each other but were able to discuss differences of opinion about topics they might not discuss in other settings.

8.2.3 Talking about learning as transformation

The theory of transformative learning was introduced in 1978 in recognition of the assumptions that frame thinking among adults in education (Mezirow, 2009). Transformative learning has been defined as:

> …the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumptions and expectations – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change…
>
> Mezirow (2009, p. 92)

This was also interesting in light of Davies' (2005) characteristic for youth work practice to move young people beyond their starting point and to engage in challenging and thought provoking experiences. It is suggested that transformation can be immediate in terms of sudden life changes or can be cumulative as a series of insights lead to changes in thinking.

In chapter five, the findings suggested that six of the young people in this study attended youth work in order to change their lives by shifting away from street-life which they claimed was troublesome. This kind of lifestyle change could be regarded as indicative of transformative learning and appeared to be due to sudden or cumulative factors that happened outside, and when, a critical moment, for example a youth worker visited school and they decided to take the step in coming to youth work. However, this offered only second-hand accounts of any learning process that may be assumed in those young people's decisions to attend and these were taken outside of youth work.

This section considers those aspects of learning inside the setting that could be regarded as cumulative learning and to consider how this kind of learning might be regarded as transformative in helping to explain young people's changing perspectives on equality. The literature on transformative learning identifies ten steps to transformation:

- Experiencing a disorienting dilemma
- Engaging in self-examination can be associated with feelings of fear, anger, shame or guilt.
- Assessing internalized assumptions; making assumptions more permeable
- Relating to others; recognizing the problem is shared
- Exploring options for new ways of being, roles and relationships
- Planning a course of action
- Acquiring knowledge and skills to take forward the action plan
- Trying out new roles; assessing them
- Building competence and confidence in new roles and relationships
- Reintegrating into life with the newly developed perspective

Mezirow (2009, p. 94)

While this study did not examine these steps in detail, applying the logic model assumed a cumulative impact of learning in the setting which could be described as transformative.

Earlier analysis had suggested that Craig saw the youth club as a place of sanctuary and safety. He later talked of an incident where some people came looking for him and a worker intervened:

> All the staff are alright 'cause they'll keep you inside… I remember one time there was people that were outside…like to look for me, and I went out…and a worker came out and got me, and took me back inside…she spoke to me and about my aggression and that, and said I should start a contact sport to take my aggression away, and that's just...everything. I just started playing football and concentrating on

> my life. Getting stuck into my work and...It…[youth work]…gave me a lot of outlook on how I was going to end up…I was hanging about on the streets and just doing stupid things…just silly things…that you think that are basically fun, but you know that you're going to get into trouble for them.
>
> Craig

This was consistent with Mezirow's transformative learning. For example, Craig appeared to experience a disorienting dilemma when young people appeared a the youth work setting looking for him, he felt fearful and angry but when a worker intervened began to realise that he could change, that his assumptions about his life involving trouble were shifted and he took action to change. He appeared to understand the potential impact and value of youth work, which meant 'everything' to him as a turning-point in his life. He developed new, less aggressive roles through football in youth work and in his part time work. He assessed his life and developed new perspectives and a different lifestyle that involved coming to youth work instead of hanging around the streets. In this sense, learning could be regarded as transformative.

While the incident outside of the setting could have been considered a key factor, the workers role also appeared to be a catalyst for change in Craig's life. For example, in this instance, had the worker not gone outside and brought Craig back into the setting, the outcome may have been very different. Had the worker only addressed the safety issues around this incident, without following through to encourage Craig's participation in sport, and to sharpen his focus on living his own life, the outcome may have also been very different. Had Craig himself not chosen to further engage in the opportunities inherent in the youth work setting, and to subsequently participate in the international youth exchange, the outcome may have also been different.

Reflecting on Craig's starting point where he expressed difficulty in breaking out from a gang, it appeared important that, for young people like him, youth work offered an alternative that included possibilities for a good life, which might not otherwise be realised. In this sense, learning in youth work was

shown to be consistent with Davies' interest in moving people on from their initial starting point and also suggested learning, as theorised by Mezirow (2009) as transformative. This also appeared to be the case in other parts of the youth work programme, as this observation extract shows:

> Following an incident during a residential, two young women were reprimanded for inappropriate behaviour. They told me that this led to five or six different conversations with the worker, who during the residential and in follow-on conversations returned to the subject in order to have them consider why their behaviour might be judged as inappropriate or if there were circumstances when it might be considered as appropriate. They told me the process was difficult and they felt annoyed that they were pulled up for something that they had initially perceived as a bit of fun, they felt embarrassed by their actions when they realised how much others were upset, they felt guilty at letting the worker down and finally, felt good on looking back, that they had grown up as a result of this experience. They said that initially they thought the worker had over-reacted but now they could see the point of being reprimanded and talked about the worker in nothing but glowing and loving terms. Over time this incident appeared to help the young people to make sense of what they had learned through this experience and so, putting things in perspective, they seemed to suggest that this incident had helped them to grow up a bit.

This extract outlines my observation of a conversation I had with two young women about a residential that happened six months earlier. I interpreted this as showing the cumulative effect of transformative learning in youth work. The initial incident was responded to during the residential, yet their reflections and on-going discussions with the worker indicated learning that they claimed had helped them to mature. Over time, the young women appeared to have undergone a series of stages in Mezirow's transformative paradigm: the incident itself was disorienting in that their initial view of it as a laugh, was not shared by others; they experienced a range of feelings that caused them to reflect on their actions and to change their relationships with

others and ultimately to suggest that they too had changed because of this incident; they reported personal transformation through building increased levels of confidence; their view of the world changed. Similarly, when asked to explain what difference becoming a youth councillor had made to thinking about equality, Ryan suggested:

> Em..I've learned to look at things more…[paused for thought]…before I'd automatically label them…I don't judge people by the way they look and how they dress…I was a youth councillor when we spoke the last time, but I think I've matured a lot more since then…I've learned things…about me and about other people…I used to find it difficult to talk to people, and I had like, confidence problems but now I don't have that problem, I've got much better at communicating…[thoughtful]…yeah, my communication skills have really improved.
>
> Ryan

This extract shows how Ryan's world view had changed over the duration of the study. Becoming a youth councillor was disorientating in causing him to reflect on his automatic tendency to label people and appeared helpful in building his personal attributes such as decision-making or judgements and self-efficacy. It also appeared to help him learn about himself and other people to become confident in his new role and to improve his skills in communication skills.

Together, the examples given in this section suggest that for some young people, their learning in youth work could be described as transformative learning. For some young people this appeared to be quite sudden transformation, while for others their change was a more prolonged and cumulative process. Although these changes might also have been influenced by incidents and conversations outside of youth work, these young people attributed their shifting perspectives to the youth workers and their participation in youth work. Thus, applying the logic model, it is assumed that this change could be described as an outcome of learning in youth work, which can be sustained in the longer term.

This section, suggests while not everyone who attended youth work experienced this kind of transformation, they did learn about equality through experiential and problem-posing approaches that helped them to take action and undergo changes in thinking or in their lives. Youth work appeared to use experiential and problem-posing interchangeably to facilitate learning and in some instances, these methods helped facilitate young people's transformation.

Sometimes this was transformation was immediately recognisable, while at other times it was more subtle, and only became apparent through later reflection. Some young people changed their view of equality through experiential and problem-posing learning but this did not transform their lives in the same way as others. In this sense, using these methods helped to meet Davies (2005) characteristic for moving young people beyond their initial starting point through a range of challenging and stimulating experiences.

This in itself was a good enough outcome for youth work, however, it is suggested that while experiential and problem-posing learning was evident across a range of programmes in the setting but that transformative learning could only be claimed in some circumstances. Thus, learning in this youth work setting could be described as largely experiential and problem-posing but could only be clearly suggested as transformative learning in a limited number of cases. However, it appeared that the young people's relationships with youth workers played a part in facilitating learning which is discussed in the following section.

8.3 Young people's relationships with youth workers

The literature has identified that relationships are important in youth work (Batsleer, 2008; Davies, 2005; Young, 2006). This includes literature on the nature of interpersonal and professional relationships between youth workers and young people and also the importance of power relationships that impact on young people's experiences of equality (Baker, et al., 2004; Furlong, et al, 1997; Jeffs and Smith, 2010, de St Croix, 2010).

The findings of this study have provided evidence of how both kinds of relationship helped to facilitate learning about equality in this youth work setting. This section adds to an under-theorised aspect of relationships in youth work by showing how the respect dimension of equality (Baker et al., 2004) was found to be helpful in developing learning about equality. It also suggests how Davies' (2005) characteristic of voluntary participation might be partly sustained by youth workers building positive relationships with young people.

8.3.1 Talking about building relationships

The young people explained their relationships with youth workers by talking about their relationships with other adults. They maintained that the youth work setting was better than other settings, such as the family or school, at offering the chance for equality, or more equal relationships. This was evident in their experiences of positive relationships with youth workers:

> I think I've got a strong… a better bond with most of the workers in here. Because I've been coming here for five years, and like now that I've grown up I see what they're talking about and everything. So, like I've got closer to them.
>
> Mags

Mags' response suggested a stronger, changed relationship that was developed over a five year period. She suggested that she had grown up, and because of this, she was now able to, 'see what they're talking about'. Thus, youth work appeared not to be a quick, or short term, fix.

The importance of relationships with workers was noted in youth work literature where, 'the process of youth work was generally seen to be contingent on the quality of relationship between a young person and a youth worker' (Harland and Morgan, 2006, p 10). The nature of this relationship was suggested as fun and respectful:

> [The workers here]…they're good to have a laugh with, but they also treat you like an adult…like in school, you get a lot of teachers, who

> just don't treat you like an adult, they treat you like a child…being treated like that…means it's easier to get your point across and it's not frustrating…they treat you, like, with more respect.
>
> Ryan

Ryan implied that having fun together and being treated with respect underpin the development of relationships that made it easier for him to communicate his ideas. Thus, perhaps in youth work, this kind of more intimate relationship helps to foster a sense of connection and belonging, in terms of what Baker et al (2004) have called a loving, caring and solidarity dimension of equality.

The young people appeared to be talking about maintenance of caring relationships of trust and that underpinned Davies' (2005) characteristics for youth work. This appeared to be especially critical to those young people whose experiences of schooling were negative, by helping them to learn through a mutual exchange of ideas and through what Davies' suggested as a '*hidden curriculum* of inter-personal interaction especially young person with young person but also young person with adult' (p. 4).

Over time, Sandra also suggested that through getting to know one of the youth workers better she was able to give her opinion and change:

> When I first came here…[named youth worker]…was always telling me what to do and I was always in bother with all the staff…but then I got into the youth exchange and things like that…and like, [worker] got to know me better... I changed a bit…like not mucking about as much…so we get on better she asks me things now...my opinion and stuff…it's much better now than when I first came up…I've quietened down and we get on better.
>
> Sandra

Sandra's perceptions on her relationships with youth workers reflected the importance of time as a factor in the changing nature of relations and roles

between young people and youth workers. This shifted from getting into trouble to having a say in decisions.

Sandra's initial response was unexpected. She and her friends pushed the boundaries of their relationships with youth workers, compared to other settings. Over time, by getting to know each other better, more amenable relations were established, where workers did not need to give their permission, as the young people themselves took control of their behaviour.

These findings have shown that establishing a trusting relationship, where those involved show solidarity and respect with and for each other, does not happen overnight. For example, each youth exchange involved at least one year of planning and two years to complete. The intensity of relations developed on the residential experiences associated with the youth exchange was not easily replicable, nor were those relationships developed to order. Yet, creating a loving and caring bond among youth workers and young people, seemed important to the young people, and were suggested by them as different to their relationships with other adults outside of youth work.

For example, one young person compared the nature of the generic youth work relationship to those he encountered while living in a residential children's unit:

> There is a totally different approach. I mean, in here, you go to them if you want to talk to them. In a residential unit staff come to you and ask you to speak to them. Whereas in here…the support is there if you need it…but if you don't want to approach anybody – they will wait till you're ready. In a unit they'll either try and put a wee bit of pressure on you…not much, I mean…I know through my own experiences…there is a wee bit of pressure put on you…just to try and open up a bit, but then in here there's no pressure to open up. If you want to open up, if you've got that trust between a youth worker and yourself, you'll open up anyway.
>
> Alex

Comparing his relationships with youth workers in this generic youth work setting to his previous relationships with workers in a residential unit, Alex suggested that, in each setting, conversations were initiated differently. In the children's unit the conversation was initiated by workers who gently encouraged the young person to open up and talk to them, while in the youth work setting, the workers waited until the young person was ready to talk.

Alex suggested that, in generic youth work, this relationship was built on trust and because of this young people might be inclined to open up, without having to be persuaded to do so. This was partly explained by the different nature and purpose of forming relationships in each setting.

For example, part of the nature and purpose of forming relationships in the residential care setting is about enabling young people to open up and disclose information, in order to identify their needs and respond to the problematic circumstances that have resulted in them having to be looked after. In youth work, part of the nature and purpose of forming relationships is characterised in the acceptance of young people as they are without applying labels in terms of perceived needs and in the view that power and control sits with the young person who can choose whether or not to engage in the learning process. These different purposes suggest that different kinds of relationship are needed.

If the nature and purpose of relationships is different, then boundaries in these two types of relationship are likely to be different. Thus, less formal and more flexible arrangements would be expected in generic youth work. This helps to explain how boundaries are different in different professional areas, and how it is possible for youth workers, in generic youth work, to develop trusting relationships in order to create a flexible starting point for the negotiation of learning. While, this analysis was based on a single person's perspective, it appeared consistent with the experiences and perspectives of others involved in this study.

For example, one young person, who lived with a long term and debilitating illness, perceived her relationship with youth workers as central to her experiences:

> You have a good laugh with them and that…If I didn't come up here I don't think I would have a good life at all…the workers encouraged me to become a volunteer…if I didn't volunteer I wouldn't have anything…before I ever came up here, I didnae have anything…in my life or that…so I'd say…the staff have helped me a lot.
>
> Sam

Again, Sam highlighted the key role of her relationship with youth workers as critical in facilitating her integration within the setting and in giving an extended focus to her life. This adds to Ryan's earlier assertion that when he felt respected, it was easier to get his point across and to Sandra's assertion that involvement in the youth exchange helped to form positive relationships.

Thus, it appears that in generic youth work, ongoing relationships between young people and youth workers changed and were, negotiated and renegotiated over time, to increase feelings of value and worth. This added to Davies' (2005) assertion that building trusting relationships are important because the voluntary principle requires youth workers to negotiate with young people, in order to sustain their participation.

The findings also suggested that the formation of relationships in youth work could not be pre-determined by the introduction of a particular activity or be achieved within a specific time-scale. Rather, the findings suggested that these relationships took time to develop and were based on a mutuality of respect and trust which suggested these relationships were based on what Baker et al, (2004) identified as the love, care and solidarity dimension of equality.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has shown how young people learned about equality through informal conversation which was grounded in relationships of trust and respect. Two of Davies (2005) characteristics were evident in learning about equality: crossing cultural and social boundaries while respecting young

people's peer relations; shifting young people's thinking from an initial starting point to widen their experiences of the world.

The young people also learned through experiential and problem-posing methods (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970;1976; 2009) which in themselves were useful in widening their horizons and in some instances, could be described as transformative learning (Mezirow, 2009).

These methods combined to create learning relationships in youth work that were always professional but where the boundaries were flexible and could be shifted. According to young people in this study, these relationships were different to those they experienced in, for example, formal or fixed settings such as schooling or in looked after accommodation. As such, the chapter suggests that relationships and learning in youth work may be suggested as boundary crossing.

Crossing social and cultural borders helped young people to construct new understandings and relationships that, for the young people in this study facilitated learning about equality. Similarly, drawing on different frames of reference demonstrated the boundary crossing nature of youth work to help construct new understandings of the setting and how learning about equality was facilitated there. Taken together these findings suggest the possibility of an additional characteristic to Davies' Manifesto: that youth work engages with young people in creating and developing opportunities for social and cultural boundary crossing that facilitates learning about equality.

PART FOUR: CONTEXTUALISING ANALYSIS

9 Discussion

Chapter Outline

The chapter is developed in five parts. First, it introduces boundary crossing as the context for discussion of a complex set of findings. Then, the next three parts address each of the three research questions to show: the young people's reasons for attending youth work; how their perceptions and experiences of equality appeared to be present in this case study setting; how learning about equality appeared to be developed in this youth work setting. Finally, the chapter draws on this analysis to make the case for five stages of negotiation that were found in this youth work setting.

Boundary crossing as a frame for discussion in this chapter.

Having examined the findings from analysis of data in chapters five, six, seven and eight, this chapter covers a wide range of territory to show the extent to which learning about equality in youth work could be understood in the context of contemporary literature.

Among practitioners there is a tendency to define youth work by what it is not, for example it is not school teaching or social work, yet in practice it is about learning and social welfare. It is therefore important to identify what youth work is, in order to defend its purpose, to develop youth work policy and practice and to sustain its future, especially in times of financial constraint. This study has suggested a complex multi-dimensional purpose that proposes youth work as a boundary crossing practice.

In theory, the concept of boundary crossing helps to understand the complexities of youth work as a boundary crossing pedagogy. However, there are risks in taking this stance. While there is a benefit in suggesting youth work as occupying the interstitial spaces between disciplinary areas which assists in taking a holistic approach, this position leaves youth work exposed

to the kind of misinterpretation that has been suggested as problematic by Davies (2005) and others (Spence, 2007; Jeffs and Smith, 2010).

This chapter explores the boundary crossing elements of youth work in order to weigh up those risks and show how taking this stance can facilitate young people's learning about equality. By necessity the chapter draws on multiple frames of reference across a range of disciplinary areas. This is intentional in showing that youth work is indeed well positioned in those interstitial spaces and as such could confidently be claimed as a boundary crossing practice. This also strengthens argument in terms of the logic model where it has been suggested that 'if narratives…cannot be linked to general theories that have been tested and corroborated, their plausibility is restricted' Leeuw (2012).

The chapter shows young people's reasons for attending the setting and how their experiences of youth work appeared to help them to learn about equality. Young people suggested their learning about equality was facilitated through a series of methods that sometimes crossed disciplinary boundaries and combined to create an optimal learning environment. I have argued that generic youth work may be interpreted as critical border pedagogy and as such confirmed as an emancipatory practice. This analysis contributes to knowledge in equality studies and to youth work literature.

Discussion is developed in sections that address the research questions:

RQ 1. Why do young people attend this youth work setting to learn about equality? (Objective a)

RQ 2. How do young people perceive and experience equality in the youth work setting? (Objectives b and d)

RQ 3. How does youth work, as practised in this setting, help young people to learn about equality? (Objectives c and e)

Additionally, in the methodology chapter, I devised a table (see p. 271) that suggested a potential alignment between two important theoretical

perspectives: the characteristics proposed in a manifesto for youth work (Davies, 2005) and the dimensions of equality proposed by Baker et al. (2004). Discussion draws on each of these perspectives in order to contextualise findings in wider literature and to consider the sense in which youth work might be proposed as a boundary crossing pedagogy.

9.1 Interpreting why young people attended youth work

9.1.1 Interpreting boundary crossing in youth work

Wenger (1998) has suggested that learning about meaning and understanding are shaped by time and place, by physical environment, by social relationships and by the individual or collective ideas of those involved in the learning process. Understanding of the world is not fixed and people are guided by different ideas or beliefs, or live in different cultural and social circumstances. This creates boundaries and borders between people and practices. If these boundaries and borders are socially constructed, then they may be socially deconstructed. Deconstructing boundaries and borders involves working within and outside of current discourse to create new ideas or alternative forms of knowledge (Giroux, 2005).

The study shows a range of projects in which a complex set of cultural and social relations appeared to assist young people to learn about equality by mixing across cultural and social boundaries which helped them to create new identities and understandings of the world, for example in becoming adult or in taking decisions. Mixing across boundaries included raising their awareness different religious beliefs or their associations with various peer/style groups.

Analysis suggested capacity in youth work for crossing or mixing cultures, in groups such as the DSG or Youth Exchange, that were consistent with an assertion of youth work as important in ‘supporting young people to form and express their own identity, as opposed to adopting given identities’ (Young, 2006, p. 38). Projects and groups that encouraged boundary crossing seemed

to underpin the young people's experiences and perceptions of equality and enabled them to 'start to define a distinctive and more autonomous adult identity' (Davies, 2005, p. 13). In this sense, attending youth work contributed to the formation of young people's social, emotional and cultural identities which were identified as key characteristics in Davies' youth work manifesto.

A selection of cultural styles was present in this setting. This included people who were described by young people, and in literature, as barbies, chavs, emos, girly-girls, Goths, grungers, moshers, metal, neds, normals, rockers and trendies (Bennet, 1999; Harris, 2004; Hodkinson, 2005; McCulloch et al., 2006). Experiencing these different cultural backgrounds or style groupings in the youth work setting, young people were encouraged by youth workers to socialise and connect across boundaries. The youth work setting was considered by young people to be a space for testing new relationships and identities, and for learning about difference.

For example, as shown earlier, both Sandra and Alex experimented with different styles and began to redefine themselves, while Alan and Derek seemed to be aware of how style created difference, which for Derek was sometimes intimidating. The range of experiences in youth work appeared to help young people to learn about multi-dimensional relations and how these combined in their formation of identities.

Further argument suggests 'identity formation remains a key starting point for youth work engagement (Batsleer, 2008, p. 24) and that 'facilitating agency means working with people within and beyond their surface identities' (Sercombe, 2010, p. 155). In this youth work context, the deliberate development of opportunities for cultural and social boundary crossing suggested a deep level of engagement in learning that, according to the young people, meant they took steps towards forming new identities. For example, three young people articulated a shift from 'troubled' identities on the streets, to more positive identities as volunteers in the youth work setting, which appeared to underpin their reasons for attending.

The level of social and cultural mixing in this setting, suggested that young people crossed boundaries when engaged in youth work. For example, in collaborations between young people and youth workers they developed the international youth exchange, or in working across professional boundaries between community-based youth work and health or leisure services, young people's social, emotional and physical well-being appeared to be improved.

Boundary crossing included working across social and cultural borders such as those of gender, ability and style grouping, all of which seemed to enhance understanding of difference. Yet, this emphasis on boundary crossing could also raise young people's awareness of commonality, by showing how they were connected through shared characteristics of gender, ability and style grouping. Thus, for some, youth work facilitated development of new ideas and identities and for others consolidated their existing ideas and identities.

This capacity in youth work for both development and consolidation of ideas could be linked to Wenger's ideas on the evolution of social practices through a mutual alignment of, 'repertoire, styles and discourses' (Wenger, 1998, p. 95) to show how youth work operates at the boundaries of practice to affirm specific practices and works across borders to build new ideas and perspectives. He called this affirmation and consolidation of practice a 'duality of boundary relations' (Wenger, 1998, p. 104). This was a useful concept in thinking about how youth work could embrace a set of defining characteristics but could also encourage thinking beyond current practice boundaries, in order to consider possibilities for change. Thus, borders and boundaries may become sites of transformation where:

- Social practices can be explored to create possibilities for learning through border crossing;
- The social construction of ideas can be questioned and through dialogue and that new ideas, meanings and understandings are generated;
- Learning across borders can be a catalyst for action and social change.

Coburn (2010, p. 33)

In developing this thesis, I suggest that by engaging in boundary crossing practices, youth work may facilitate young people's experiences of difference which, in this setting, appeared to help them to consolidate and sustain their current identities or to question and develop their emerging identities. This highlighted the importance of creating safe spaces for young people to discover and redefine themselves. In this sense and in earlier chapters, this study has shown that in the youth work setting exploration of difference and commonality helped the young people to learn about equality and as such formed part of their reasons for attending.

This section has shown how young people's capabilities for power sharing and developing their capacities as full contributors to the world appeared to be enhanced in this setting, which offered a safe space for young people to cross boundaries and challenge traditional hierarchies in order to learn about difference and the power dimension of equality. It appeared that in youth work, taking an asset-based approach (Antonovsky, 1996; Bartley, 2006) learning was built on young people's potential rather than deficit-driven responses to perceived need which suggested a starting point that valued young people and their diverse social and cultural identities. Thus, youth work could be suggested as promoting equality of condition (Baker et al, 2004) where equality is viewed as capability and is concerned with power and democracy as a social function (Sen, 1985; Tawney, 1964).

9.1.2 Interpreting participation as voluntary or negotiated?

This section discusses the voluntary and negotiated nature of participation in a generic youth work setting to show how dimensions of respect and recognition, and of power were evidenced in this setting. It also discusses the voluntary principle which, in youth work literature, suggests that voluntary participation, as distinct from being required or referred to attend, distinguishes educational youth work from practices that take place in schools, prisons, or in social work settings (Davies, 2005; Young, 2006).

As noted earlier, this setting was a safe space for socialising with friends, where young people were free to choose what they engaged in and to come and go as they pleased, typically to go to the local chip shop, meet friends or to have a cigarette. Despite incorporating a small number of specialist groups, participation in the setting was usually voluntary: young people chose to attend. Thus, the facility operated to a widely held principle of voluntary participation that was consistent with youth work discourse and regarded as an authentic signpost of effective practice (Davies, 2005; Jeffs and Smith, 1999; Spence et al., 2006).

The case study location was chosen in order to discover the experiences of young people who attended because they wanted to, not because they had to. This starting point for generic youth work, often referred to as the voluntary principle (Davies and Merton, 2009; Merton et al, 2004; Ord, 2009) was suggested as underpinning practice, during my informal discussions with five different youth workers. This principle was suggested as important in local policy and practice documents (Burns and Smith, 2008) and was reflected in the way that young people talked about their relationships with youth workers.

Yet, when asked about why he attended youth work, Derek's freedom of choice was found to be limited by the weather and a lack of alternatives to skateboarding in the winter. Factors such as, what was on offer (cinema, swimming and shopping centre), the cost of attending alternative venues and whether his friends went there, also contributed to his decision to participate. Similarly, Annie and Fiona were critical of the lack of activities for young women in the setting and, together with Sam they suggested that young disabled people were limited by the choice of social places in which to hang out with their friends.

Thus, this study suggested that the voluntary principle may be compromised through lack of alternatives, or where, the range of provision is limited. For example, at least some of the young people may not have chosen to attend if they felt there were interesting, affordable and accessible alternatives. This may mean that attendance in youth work was not entirely voluntary. However,

some young people suggested that there were alternatives and so, by choosing to attend, it may be inferred that their participation was voluntary.

This led me to question whether youth work is ever voluntary. When thinking about equality of condition, it appeared to be important to establish whether there was a fair and free choice in the decision to attend. In this sense, it was important to consider the extent to which the voluntary principle might be compromised, yet the encounter could still be called youth work. I returned to the position taken by Sercombe (2010) which defines youth work by its focus on the young person as the primary client in their social contexts.

This suggests that participation is a negotiated venture, involving young people and youth workers in a professional collaboration, rather than voluntary association with each other. This calls into question the persistent focus on the voluntary principle in literature and practice. Yet, according to literature, the idea of people being compelled to do youth work is anathema and so the importance of the voluntary principle required further discussion.

Davies has suggested that 'building trusting relationships with young people based on mutual respect' (Davies, 2005, p. 9) is a critical element of youth work practice, which was articulated as important by young people in this study. In light of emerging practices across a range of disciplinary areas, Davies highlights that, workers need to be 'engaging young people in as many decisions about content and method as are compatible with laid down curricula and available resources' (Davies, 2005, p. 9). Batsleer has also suggested that 'freedom of association, which categorises all informal education, has to be carefully negotiated in work with young people whose lives are subject…to so much scrutiny and surveillance' (Batsleer, 2005, p. 91). Thus, the idea of the voluntary principle is complex.
The voluntary principle is compromised when a young person attends because they must, as in school-based youth work, but it may also be compromised if young people participate only because their friends do, or because it is affordable, or there are no local alternatives. While there may be benefits associated with volunteering to opt in or out of youth work, for example,

within sight of a teacher or prison officer, these benefits may, as suggested by Derek, Annie, Fiona and Sam, also apply to opting in or out of youth work in benefits associated with being part of a peer group.

The study suggests that while the voluntary principle is important, it is also mediated by a range of factors outwith the youth work setting. Perhaps the voluntary principle may not be the distinguishing feature it is often claimed to be. For example, findings pointed to other factors such as the relationships between youth workers and young people, as important.

Not one young person said that they attended youth work because they were free to choose whether to engage or not. Yet, they all talked about the importance of the relationships they formed there and in particular, they said these relationships were different to those they had experienced elsewhere, or previously.

Thus, whether youth work happens in generic settings, where young people are free to come and go as they please, or happens in schools or prisons, where their movements are restricted, might not be as important as currently suggested. Instead, the assertion by Sercombe (2010) and paraphrased by me could be a useful distinguishing feature: seeing the young person as the primary client in a professional relationship that starts where young people are starting in their social contexts. This relationship appears to be built on mutual respect and recognition as the context in which the learning takes place.

This suggests that so long as young people are not coerced into attending for example, through sanctions applied for non-attendance, the negotiation of relationships and distribution of power in those relationships, appear to be important. Working in dialogue *with* young people, as distinct from delivering services *to* or *for* them, suggests a generic programme can create possibilities for the development of relationships and alternative distributions of power. I suggest that this dialogue may not always be developed in settings that the young person has freely chosen to attend but that this does not make authentic and critical dialogue impossible.

However, it may also be that authentic and trusted dialogue is not possible unless the voluntary principle is maintained. For example, in a school setting, it may be that what Freire (1972) has called 'magical consciousness' is achieved. Yet, dialogue was defined as 'the encounter of those addressed to the common task of learning and acting…in their vocation to be more fully human' (Freire, 1996, p. 71) and so, I suggest that an authentic dialogue remains possible in settings where the voluntary principle is compromised. Indeed, in seeking to challenge oppression and inequality, perhaps those sites where the voluntary principle is compromised could be particularly useful as a starting point for critical dialogue about, for example, improvements in schooling or in responding to offending.

Study findings did not refute or vindicate the voluntary principle as a key characteristic that distinguishes youth work from other kinds of work with young people. So, the question of what youth workers are doing, in those settings where the voluntary principle is compromised and which, according to the literature, should not be called youth work, remains unanswered.

However, the voluntary principle supported by Davies' assertion that young people should choose to attend, strengthens what Baker et al. (2004) say about challenging power, in the sense that young people retain power by not being compelled to attend. In this sense, generic youth work offers both young people and youth workers an alternative starting point to those other settings they might engage in together to develop learning.

In summary, this section has examined the voluntary principle to suggest that it might not be as important as currently claimed in literature. If relationships are built on mutual respect and recognition of the social and cultural contexts of the young people and the range of settings where they could encounter youth workers, and youth work methods, it could still be possible to create authentic dialogue for learning about equality. This could be helpful in challenging power inequalities in those settings where the voluntary principle is compromised. Together, this suggests that youth work contributes to respect

and recognition (Baker et al., 2004) and to understanding of power and the nature of voluntary participation in youth work (Davies, 2005).

9.1.3 Interpreting youth work as an alternative to dominant discourse

Offering an alternative to other kinds of work with young people, this case study appears to suggest that participation in youth work affords young people a chance to rethink their relationships, not only in youth work but also in other parts of their lives. This section explores how this kind of work might be understood as an alternative to the dominant discourse about young people.

According to Devlin (2006) discourses about young people are embodied in social institutions such as schooling, youth work, social work, youth justice and in established legal and media practices that contribute to the formation of identity among young people. This suggested it would be interesting to examine whether youth work discourses, and practices in this setting, might facilitate young people's experiences of equality and in doing so, might generate an alternative to the dominant discourse.

In talking about equality, Thompson (2003) proposed that those who work with people who experience inequalities should explicitly promote emancipatory practices that 'operate within a discourse that is overtly geared towards promoting equality and valuing diversity in order to ensure that inequalities are positively addressed' (Thompson, 2003, p. 40). This idea of 'overt promotion' suggests that open and conscious discussion of equality with young people is important, rather than simply assuming it as an underpinning principle of youth work.

While this study has shown that young people learned about and experienced equality in this setting, evidence was provided by young people in response to questions I asked them about equality or when I observed them in the setting. Despite identifying that equality was an underpinning value base in literature, this did not appear to be developed through a conscious or explicit element that promoted learning about equality.

However, I did not ask youth workers about this and so I do not know whether programmes like the international exchange or DSG, were developed to overtly promote learning about equality and change perspectives, or if young peoples' learning was a by-product of a different purpose. It would have been useful to ask youth workers about this to clarify the extent to which youth work had deliberately sought to create an alternative to dominant discourse.

Participation is another area of discourse that has raised contradictions in youth work. Participation has been attributed as having a 'mushrooming effect' whereby, once engaged, young people's involvement increases and so participation becomes a catalyst for future action (Hackett, 2004). Yet, it was also discovered by Mohajer and Earnest (2009) and Podd (2010) that, while young people's participation has been extended across many areas of public policy, capacity for this kind of participation to enhance youth empowerment is limited within the present social systems and structures. For example, in terms of how learning about equality may be developed, this study offers evidence of what Hill et al. (2004) suggested as power sharing. Yet, despite this kind of micro-level progress, power remained with the youth workers.

This appeared to work against Davies' (2005) aims of liberation and transformation, by maintaining a dominant, adultist discourse which may mean that rather than establish a new discourse, young people quickly learn how to conform to youth worker expectations and to perpetuate their ideas. By conforming to dominant discourse, young people are more likely to 'fit in' and less likely to resist oppression.

Where the dominant discourse criminalises and categorises young people as deviant (Barber, 2007; Morgan and O'Hare, 2001), it follows that this works against youth empowerment. This discourse may explain a series of contradictions in youth work. In the literature, these were suggested as including structural under-funding and misappropriation of youth work for other purposes (Davies, 2005; Jeffs and Smith, 2010). Yet, despite these contradictions, this study suggests that, in this setting, social relationships were different to those outside the setting.

For example, as suggested earlier, the young people's relationships with youth workers and with young people from different cultural groups appeared to be different from those they experienced outside of the setting. Rather than being excluded from decision making or treated as 'not-yet-citizens', the young people said they were listened to, took decisions and engaged in conversations with youth workers which they claimed were different from those they engaged in with adults they encountered elsewhere.

By deliberately seeking to include young people in decision making and taking forward their ideas, it appeared that in this setting:

> Empowerment strategies…[were used to]…focus on enabling marginalized groups to create and recreate their social norms, to seek changes in inequitable conditions, to develop cultural and cross-boundary identities, and to gain access to social resources that promote health.
>
> Wallerstein (2006, p. 17)

Despite acknowledging inconsistencies in definitions of empowerment and what its aims are, Mohajer and Earnest (2009) suggest five recurring themes that were hypothesised as present in empowering programmes:

> - a clear vision of the goals of empowerment agreed on by all stakeholders;
> - formation of groups/circles who develop critical consciousness through dialogue and problematisation;
> - the content of the programme should involve skills development;
> - the content of the programme should involve an examination of culture, beliefs and values of both the facilitator and the participants; and
> - community involvement.
>
> Mohajer and Earnest (2009, p. 429)

This study provided evidence of these recurring themes: for example, in projects such as the youth council, youth exchange, disability sports and in the café area. This suggested that young people who, in other settings, were subject to adult power appeared, in this setting, to be empowered.

On a micro-level therefore, there was evidence of progress towards an alternative discourse in this youth work setting. Mohajer and Earnest (2009) also stress that in empowering excluded young people, the focus on personal development often detracts from a key purpose of empowerment in bringing about social change. The findings of this study suggest that in this youth work setting, micro-level social change was possible. Thus, I propose this as evidence that youth work can contribute to the development of an alternative discourse that promotes action for social change and which challenges inequality.

However, it appears that while overt action was promoted in response to inequality and human rights, for example, through the world issues group, the promotion of action for equality among young people was largely covert, rather than overt and specific, in youth work. For example, the capacity for wider social change was shown in the young people's experiences of cultural boundary crossing during the international exchange. However, much of this capacity was camouflaged as shown in their focus on the individual benefits accrued by those young people who participated in the programme.

By focussing their comments about learning on gaining confidence, learning about themselves and improving their behaviour as a consequence of participation in the youth exchange, the young people did not make clear the connection between their learning and wider social change. However, they did demonstrate an appreciation of wider capability for social change by stating how their participation helped them to understand difference and informed their judgements about, for example, ability, religion and culture.

Thus, while there was capacity for wider social change, a focus on individual development seemed to mask the possibility of using this learning in a wider social context. Thompson's call for a more overt emancipatory discourse is

therefore useful in asserting youth work practice as being informed by educational and emancipatory theories and practices (Freire, 1993; Giroux, 2005; Ord, 2007; Tett, 2006; Wallace, 2008).

Findings also suggested that micro-level social change happened when young people learned by ascribing their own meanings to the processes they engaged in, rather than being led by existing discourses, outside of the setting. In this sense, calls by Baker et al. (2004) for social change were also met. As young people's relationships with workers changed, they became more engaged in the setting. They reported becoming more confident about asserting their rights and in initiating dialogue that led to changes in practice.

Through this alternative discourse, it appeared that learning was constructed around both individual and social aspects of the setting. On one hand, the young people reported personal development in skills and confidence that were driven by their own choices and through their internalisation and application of new knowledge. By contrast, they also reported the importance of collaborative social relationships with youth workers and among young people that developed over time, which helped them make sense of their experiences from both inside and outside of the setting.

In this sense, it was possible to view findings from both constructivist (focussed on the individual) and constructionist (focussed on the social and collaborative) standpoints, in order to consider the construction of discourse in this setting. It would have been interesting to consider youth workers' views on this, but these were outwith the scope of this study, so more research is needed to clarify the veracity of this argument in terms of understanding how an alternative discourse might be constructed within specific policy environments.

Yet, according to findings discourse in this setting appeared to encourage boundary crossing and empowered young people to bring about micro-level change. Thus, both the power dimension of equality (Baker et al., 2004) and the balance of power characteristic (Davies, 2005) were evident and informed by a flexible curriculum for learning in youth work in this youth work setting.

9.1.4 Interpreting a youth work curriculum

One approach to the development of learning in youth work has been the development of a youth work curriculum (Milburn et al.1995; Ord, 2007). The youth work curriculum has tended to build on ideas of curriculum as process where 'the focus of educational youth work is concerned with the processes which young people negotiate in order to grow in personal and social development' (Milburn et al.1995, p.9) and also where, 'the prime function of the curriculum is to promote youth work as being responsive to the educational, social, cultural, political and recreational needs of young people' (Jardine, 2001, p. 8). This means that in youth work the curriculum starts where young people are starting and responds to their needs, rather than starting with externally driven content. Milburn et al., proposed elements of the curriculum for youth work in Scotland:

- Open and flexible
- Clear in its aims and objectives
- Negotiated and responsive to the needs of young people
- Attractive to young people
- Relevant to those taking part
- Established on young people's own terms

Milburn et al. (1995, p. 18)

Buchroth (2010) suggests that curriculum is shaped by three interests: control; understanding; emancipation. If the curriculum is intended as a means of controlling the direction of youth work or of the learning process she argues that it becomes a powerful device in developing practice that is driven by external forces or by people remote from the setting, rather than young people or youth workers.

If the curriculum is about understanding, it contributes to knowledge of the way the world is and offers a framework through which learning happens. The curriculum is a collaborative venture involving young people and youth

workers in discovery of understanding, insight and building knowledge that individuals can purposefully utilise to enhance their potential.

Finally, if the curriculum is about emancipation, knowledge is created through the processes of learning. This links directly to the problem-posing pedagogy of Freire (1970) by suggesting curriculum is not simply about consciousness raising, where an individual develops their understanding of the world, it is about Freire's conceptualisation of conscientisation, where learning shifts from individual consciousness about our own situations, to a shared understanding of the structures of oppression which in turn leads to collective social action. Thus, Buchroth (2010) suggests that:

> Curriculum is not fixed or arbitrary, but rather the result of a complex interplay of interests and perspectives…political, social, economic, ideological…[and]…is the result of deliberate choices…it is not neutral, but socially constructed and ultimately political
>
> Buchroth (2010, p. 64).

These perspectives helped me to make sense of the curriculum for youth work in this setting which appeared to model a mix of process and product based curriculum. For example, participating in an international youth exchange trip incorporated the content and products of learning but also incorporated a process of cultural boundary crossing that helped young people to develop their understanding of their own values and to respect those of others.

It appeared that, when participating in both content and product driven activity, the processes of youth work played a key role in creating spaces that helped make issues of difference visible. This appeared to be especially useful for young people who might not otherwise see or experience those alternative perspectives on the world, for example, because they could not afford to participate in programmes. This suggested that youth work offered a dynamic curriculum that enabled young people to cross cultural boundaries in order to make sense of their world view.

In this sense the youth work curriculum could be described as doing what Boud (2000) has called 'double duty', meaning that while the overt purpose might be to participate in a specific activity, a less obvious function of participation might include a more democratic and social purpose than simply the product or purpose of a specific project.

By creating safe spaces for difference to be explored, by making difference visible, and by questioning and building understanding of difference, a function for youth work appeared to be the creation of possibilities for a Freirian decoding of symbols that contribute to the formation of common sense views of the world. As already shown, this kind of decoding was developed through dialogue and activity that encouraged young people to think about what was happening. Thus, when they engaged in youth work young people were encouraged to consider how their experiences could be useful or applied in other contexts.

This research shows that youth work offered possibilities for the formation of positive relations and boundary crossing in order to promote positive discourse and challenge negative stereotyping. By listening to young people and not viewing them as being lower in status to adults, empowering relationships were formed around the kind of equal respect and recognition that is needed if equality of condition is to be realised (Baker et al, 2005). This helped facilitate learning about difference and, in this sense, suggested that in this setting, the curriculum for learning in youth work was in keeping with the elements proposed by Milburn et al. (1995).

I have already shown that this curriculum was observed in programmes that were open and flexible in the café area; included clear aims such as those related to the youth exchange; were negotiated in response to young people's needs to meet and make friends and form relationships; were attractive in helping them to improve their sense of well-being; were relevant to the young people's lives in the DSG and in forming adult identities; were established on their own terms in the youth council.

It could therefore be argued that the curriculum for youth work contributed to understanding of the learning dimension of equality (Baker et al, 2004) and supported the engagement of young people in social educational and creative activity that offered new challenges for learning and so contributed to Davies' (2005) manifesto for youth work. However, while it is possible that youth work makes a contribution to young people's learning through development of a process driven curriculum, Ord (2007) has also called into question assumptions about the extent to which outcomes might be measured to produce anything more than an impression of the value of youth work.

9.1.5 Interpreting the value of youth work?

In chapter five and six, I showed that young people attended youth work for three main reasons:

- To meet friends, make friends and have fun;
- To do activities and develop new skills;
- To volunteer in helping run groups or activities.

Each of these appeared to be valued by young people and underpinned development of a number of benefits that enabled them to variously:

- Build self-confidence and self-belief
- Form a positive identity
- Transform their understanding of the world
- Co-operate with others
- Experience feelings of belonging and kinship
- Relax and enjoy a sense of well-being
- Influence decisions
- Reciprocate trust and respect in their relationships with others
- Volunteer to help others.

Yet, despite this range of benefits it was difficult to measure with any certainty, the impact of youth work, in a meaningful or specific way.

Following the elements of the youth work curriculum suggested by Milburn et al. (1995) it is also difficult to imagine how a fixed youth work curriculum could be developed because they suggested this as entirely flexible and, like Davies, that the learning is dependent on the starting point and interests of the young people involved:

> The actual course of …[youth work] practice…is ultimately decided by human interactions which are always fluid, continuously shifting and which therefore can offer no guarantee of reaching certain and final endpoints.
>
> Davies (2005, p. 21)

Thus, a process based curriculum for youth work cannot be tested in the same way as a content driven curriculum. According to Jeffs and Smith (2010) youth workers have, for years, been wary of claiming particular results from practice and they cite McAlister-Brew (1957, p. 183) who suggested, 'A youth leader must try not to be too concerned about results, and at all costs not be over-anxious'. However, while there are no guarantees about reaching specific outcomes, the young people, in this study identified how their learning was developed in youth work.

This seemed to fit a process based curriculum for development as proposed by Kelly (1995) and which, according to Ord (2007) suggests that:

> Education must also be concerned with social development, not only the cognitive processes and functions necessary for conceptualising our place in the social world but also the affective or emotional aspect of development. The exploration of who we are and learning about ourselves in relation to others as well as developing an appreciation of difference.
>
> Ord (2007, p. 37)

This study suggests that learning in this youth work setting was developed in this way. Sometimes learning was planned in advance and at other times

developed around impromptu opportunities or conversations developed by a youth worker or young person in the setting. This was largely consistent with youth work literature that suggests association and the formation of relationships as core elements of youth work practice (Davies, 2005; Harland and Morgan, 2006; Jeffs and Smith, 2010; Robertson, 2005; Young, 2006) and defined as a cornerstone of its emancipatory and democratic purpose (Taylor, 2010). Yet, it was also consistent with a curriculum for youth work as developmental process.

Thus, Ord's argument is compelling in suggesting that the value of youth work process may not be easily predicted; rather, its value often becomes evident in the unfolding experiences of young people and where 'its end products can only be attained during and after the process' (2007, p. 39). These experiences and processes may be situated in the present time or a specific setting yet learning may not be realised or achieved until much later, thus again the application of logic becomes useful in framing discussion of an unfolding and developmental process.

While the young people's experiences, seemed to suggest they learned about equality, these offered understanding of how their perceptions and experiences contributed to learning, as part of an ongoing and developing process. This process started long before they attended youth work, and will continue long into their futures, and therefore offer one interpretation of learning in this specific setting. Even when applying the logic model as discussed earlier, there are no guarantees that a specific intervention will predicate a particular outcome. The logic model offers 'an argument with evidence from which it is reasonable to conclude with confidence that the intervention has made a contribution and why' (Mayne, 2012, p.273). Thus, it is possible to plan ahead and see the direction of travel whereby 'the facilitation of general outcomes can be planned for but the detail emerges during the process' (Ord, 2007, p. 95).

Notwithstanding the unpredictability of learning in youth work, the reasons young people gave for attending youth work and the benefits they appeared to gain, does provide a compelling argument that in this setting, youth work

addressed young people's need to socialise with friends in a comfortable environment. This argument makes it reasonable to conclude that youth work also offered much needed resources in, for example, access to services that seemed to enhance their learning about aspects of difference and improve their prospects for a good life.

Yet, these 'outcomes' could not be guaranteed in advance, nor could they be applied to all young people in this setting. By adopting a flexible process based curriculum outcomes were emergent and were realised over a series of visits and interactions with others in the setting. Thus, by applying the logic model it can be suggested that the learning processes and value base in this youth work setting were heading towards outcomes in terms of social and egalitarian purposes.

This section outlines how youth work could be suggested as a negotiated practice that adds to understanding of the learning and working dimension of equality (Baker et al, 2004) by showing how learning was developed and valued in the setting. It suggested that in some instances the voluntary principle may be compromised but this did not mean that practice in those instances could not be considered as youth work. The section showed possibilities for new discourses and also provided evidence of Davies' (2005) characteristic for working with young people on their own territory, and in a comfortable space where they can connect with each other by showing those programme elements that young people valued and suggested as reasons for attending. The range of elements that combined together suggested that in this setting youth work was developed as boundary crossing pedagogy.

9.2 Interpreting young people's experiences and perceptions of equality in youth work

Building on earlier chapters that examined specific research questions, this section discusses a series of empirical data that, according to young people in this study, exemplified their experiences and perceptions of equality in the

youth work setting. Each part of this discussion required a different analytical frame to contextualise my analysis and to show a range of boundary crossing aspects of youth work practice.

9.2.1 Interpreting youth work through participation in the youth council

The literature review suggested that since the 1980's youth participation had become a focus for practice in generic youth work, including work in support of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Bessant, 2007; United Nations, 1989). However, the literature review also raised questions about the extent to which young people's rights to participate in decision making were influenced by the persistent use of adult-led models that sometimes served as a mechanism of surveillance or control (McCulloch, 2007; Podd, 2010; Shaw and McCulloch, 2009). This section discusses the perspectives and experiences of three young people in this study who were youth councillors.

The youth councillors said they used informal and outreach methods to engage a wider group in consultations about services in order to facilitate the engagement of hard to reach young people. However, the findings showed this progress towards increased participation was achieved through hierarchical, adult lead democratic structures.

Adult youth workers directed much of the youth council development while young people had limited autonomy or control. For example, the youth councillors developed creative ways of engaging young people and highlighted issues of concern but these were informed by strategic priorities for the area and by policy discourse, as noted earlier, in regard to concern for anti-social behaviour. There was no evidence that the young people were encouraged to consider alternative models of democratic participation. This suggested that the youth council mirrored existing democratic structures, where those adults in power retained power.

Yet, the youth council also exemplified power sharing by involving a variety of young people, including some who could be described as marginalised or excluded on grounds of race, ability and their experiences of poverty.

However, Baker et al (2004, p. 39) have argued that by maintaining hierarchical power structures the opportunity for ‘a more participatory form of politics’ is reduced, and so equality of condition requires a move towards more participatory approaches, and a challenging of power inequalities in other areas of life, not only in the political sphere.

By engaging young people in decisions about the creation of policies, in some respects the youth council may be argued as a new form of participatory youth politics. However, while this meets Davies’ requirements for the balance of power to be tipped in young people’s favour by modelling practice on existing, and arguably flawed mechanisms for political participation, the youth council does not appear to go far enough in creating the conditions for equality of power (Baker et al, 2004).

As in the rest of society, the youth council operated on different levels but was based on what might be considered as an adult led and reduced model of democracy (Giroux, 2009). It mirrored existing structures by feeding from local area, to authority wide and then national youth parliament. The youth council operated a traditional hierarchy, rather than considering democratic possibilities beyond the vote, and towards more public discourses of participative democracy (Heywood, 2007).

These experiences were consistent with other research (McCulloch, 2007; Deucher and Maitles, 2008) that highlighted personal benefits for individuals but suggested that participation did not facilitate changes in how society viewed or included young people in democratic processes. In some respects this was close to what Baker et al. (2004) have described as, ‘liberal democracy...[where]..elections are seen, primarily, as a method for choosing and limiting the power of decisions-makers’ (Baker et al, 2004, p. 29) by playing their part in hierarchical political structures that privilege culturally dominant groups.

Despite showing progress in personal development, moves towards social change were limited. For example, as a simulation of adult processes, the youth council did little to challenge negative views and stereotyping of young

people as deficient to adults (Devlin, 2006; Deucher, 2009; McCulloch, 2007). Indeed, while having a youth council in place may imply a challenge to adult dominance, its modelling of adult processes weakened this implication. Power was retained by youth workers in relation to the youth council structure and organisation which, it could be argued, helped to maintain the status quo and assume adult power over young people.

This assumption of adult power might also be suggested as common sense. Yet, Gramsci (1999) would argue that everyday common sense is part of the hegemony that maintains current configurations of power. Gramsci defines commons sense as:

> The most widespread conception of life…a product of history and a part of the historical process… Common sense is not something rigid and immobile, but is continually transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life. 'Common sense' is the folklore of philosophy, and is always half-way between folklore properly speaking and the philosophy, science, and economics of the specialists.'(p.630)

Hegemony has been defined as 'the ascendency or domination of one element or system over others' (Heywood, 2007, p. 7). Hegemony was suggested by Gramsci (1999) as the means through which ideologies are maintained, not by domination but in more subtle ways through social, cultural and economic functions to bring:

> "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys
>
> Gramsci (1999, p. 145)

Common sense is thus suggested as a powerful hegemonic means of maintaining the status quo, which in current western societies, keeps young people in a subordinate position to adults (Giroux, 2009).

For example, when Sandra suggested that the rules in this setting were 'common sense', I interpreted this as part of what Gramsci proposed as hegemonic consent to the dominant ideological position. Whether consciously or sub-consciously, Sandra's position reflected dominant discourse in suggesting that right and wrong 'rules' would be in keeping with the status quo. Yet, as identified in the literature review, the dominant discourses in Western societies may be discriminating against young people who can be subject to 'often significant forms of age-discrimination' (Davies, 2011, p. 4).

However, this interpretation of findings offers only a partial view of the youth council because the young people also gave a very positive account of their experiences. They suggested benefits of participating in the youth council because it incorporated working with peers, which helped them to demonstrate 'productive connections with young people and to have impacts they value' (Davies, 2005, p. 13). For example, they devised a series of consultation events for schools in order to share information and receive feedback on their proposals for the youth strategy. They also talked about their role in gaining insights from young people who do not routinely participate in consultations.

All of the young people in this study who were youth councillors said they were empowered, in control, and able to make a difference to policies and practices. Indeed, the youth workers and those responsible for supporting the youth council confirmed this view and the young people and youth workers cited examples of how policies had been changed in response to consultation events or processes. Thus, on a micro level, this suggests that the young people's participation in the youth council did bring changes and had a positive impact on their lives, and on the lives of other young people.

These two interpretations of the youth council present a paradox that is not entirely resolvable. On one hand, it appears that youth work could help young people to reconfigure democratic possibilities, in and beyond the setting, as

part of a wider consultation framework for planning services and changing public opinion about young people. Conversely, youth work was also shown to model, and perhaps reinforce, an unequal power dynamic between young people and adults, that appeared to be inherent in dominant discourse.

Yet, in this youth work setting, the various elements of this paradox seemed to create an opportunity for change. For example, when meetings were cancelled, the young people discussed this with workers. Over time, and through ongoing dialogue and negotiation, the procedures for attending meetings were revised. This showed how their persistence brought micro-level change, as youth councillors were then supported financially to attend Scottish Parliament meetings, without needing to be accompanied by a worker. The young people suggested this was a shift in power and trust that had not been evident in their earlier experiences. Thus, it appeared to them as a change in power relations.

This paradox highlights the complexity and subtlety of hegemony and of youth work methods. For example, in advocating a problem posing approach to education, learning should begin with the identification of problems and then by responding to these, through dialogue, as people reach a critical consciousness which enables them to take action for social transformation (Feire, 1993; Giroux, 2005; Kincheloe, 2008). By posing the cancellation of meetings as a problem, the young people took the lead in developing dialogue and a series of critical conversations that led to micro-level social change in this setting.

This suggested that questions about who leads in youth work are tied to expressions of power and how relationships are negotiated in order to facilitate or hinder power sharing. This appeared consistent with policy discourse. For example, working closely with Scottish Government, YouthLink advocates that young people engage in participatory projects that develop social action to help fulfil their human rights, obligations and responsibilities of citizenship (YouthLink, 2010).

As a symbol of democracy, it could be that the Youth Council was not just a decision making body that involves young people in seeking the opinions of

their peers. Rather, through regular consultation processes and routine meetings, the youth councillors produced strategic plans and negotiated action that could embody youth work processes that strengthen the engagement of young people in democratic purpose. This suggests that using youth work methods, the youth council contributed a counter hegemony to prevailing discourse.

In this sense, the meaning of the youth council can be constructed collaboratively by young people and youth workers. In this setting the status quo was challenged through young people's participation in those decisions as citizens. In this sense, the youth council and developments in youth participation do not express or define what it means to participate; instead, they invite young people to make sense of or construct new understandings of what it means to be a youth councillor.

As a response to the UN Convention on the rights of children and young people, the youth council and other models for youth participation are still evolving. O'Brien and Moules (2007, p. 397) proposed a fairer sharing of power, linked to the ability of young people to take action. Yet, in arguing for power to be tipped towards young people, Davies (2005) suggested 'the power which young people can and do actually exercise within the youth work relationship is, of course, relative' (p. 10). In this study young people exemplified this in their comparisons between the youth work setting and other parts of their lives.

Participation in the youth council suggested the relationship between adult power and youth power were inextricably connected but not fixed. Instead, the process of decision taking appeared to follow an almost ritualistic, to-ing and fro-ing, over a prolonged period of negotiation. These negotiations appeared to be mutually beneficial, in that young people were empowered to take important decisions on policy and practice, and youth workers appeared to be empowered to practice critical youth work by facilitating a dynamic response to democratic purpose. However, this kind of mutually beneficial process is not without implications in terms of policy and practice, which I will return to in the final chapter of this thesis.

This compared to findings in a study conducted by McCulloch (2007) that developed understanding of youth-participation which highlighted the impact of power in youth work. McCulloch identified that youth workers routinely, 'make decisions with and alongside, rather than for the young people they work with' (McCulloch, 2007, p. 19). The evidence in my study suggested that although youth workers took a leading role in facilitating young people's decision making they did this in way that was empowering, and over time, their role changed as young people took greater responsibility for attending meetings or taking decisions.

McCulloch also highlighted the need for an interface between empowering young people to run their own affairs and avoiding problems that were derived from their lack of experience, knowledge or understanding. The findings from this study suggest that such an interface was present in the youth work setting and that, despite the paradoxical nature of youth council participation social change was possible. This could suggest the beginnings of a slow and emerging challenge to the status quo on dominant ageist discourse.

In summary, the young people suggested that they worked together with youth workers to devise a range of strategies for involving them in decision-making. Their experiences suggested decisions were not always youth led but that over time the young people challenged this and developed power relations that appeared as a more participatory politics, working alongside youth workers, where the balance of power was tipped in young people's favour (Baker et al, 2004; Davies, 2005). Thus, this study shows that the young people's experiences of participation in the youth council responded to a critique of adult-led models of participation by pushing the boundaries of power in their relations with youth workers.

9.2.2 Interpreting youth work as a series of negotiated relationships

Young people's relationships with youth workers were developed during conversations that were initiated in a trusted environment. Some young people likened those relationships to kinship and friendship ties. They believed they could talk more openly with youth workers than, for example, parents or care

workers, and found it easier to get their point across. This helped them to develop agency but despite closely bonded relationships, boundaries were maintained. Thus, the youth work setting was a social space that felt, to the young people, like a family. Yet, feelings of kinship did not mean that professional boundaries were removed; rather, this suggested that relationships in youth work were different to others the young people encountered.

Jeffs and Smith (2010) suggest that maintaining the youth work relationship requires variety and is contextualised by the environment in which the youth work takes place. Thus, what is accepted in one setting may not be acceptable in another. In this case setting, relationships were developed in a space that was informal and where relationships were built on conversations in the café.

The informal nature of generic youth work meant that it was not surprising for the young people to describe their relationships as being like friendship or family ties. Their comments about youth workers as being 'like a trusted family member' or 'an older friend' appeared indicative of the informal context and showed a level of the love, care and solidarity that suggested the young people were able to form close relationships (Baker et al, 2005) and to develop enhanced feelings of belonging which Davies' (2005) suggests as important in developing social and peer relations.

Davies (2005) also highlights the need for workers to 'negotiate and re-negotiate the terms of engagement with young people so that youth work's distinctive style and processes can be allowed to develop' (Davies, 2005, p. 9). This idea of negotiation suggests a co-operative element in the ongoing development of relationships between the young people and youth workers.

For example, as they began to make sense of their experiences in the setting, the young people reported feelings of solidarity and connectivity that developed through sharing new experiences together and working closely on projects with each other and with youth workers. They showed feelings, friendships and association which Batsleer (2008) suggested contributes to social capital building and helps to develop a cohesive response in communities.

Ryan's experiences showed that by working together to take decisions and resolve problems, youth workers and young people formed a bond that helped them build a cohesive response to aspirations and needs. This bond developed over time to strengthen relationships of solidarity. So, the young people's experiences in this setting implied that prolonged involvement, similar to Putnam's metaphor of league bowlers, was needed 'by requiring regular participation with a diverse set of acquaintances… [to]…represent a form of sustained social capital that is not matched by an occasional pick-up game' (Putnam, 2000, p. 113), in order to negotiate a series of changing relationships.

The youth exchange exemplified a long-term project that enhanced social connectedness amongst young people and youth workers. It did this by involving young people in programmed sessions or informal conversations that enabled them to share historical understandings of culture and compare these with their experiences of their own and different cultures. The process of sharing knowledge and experiencing cultural differences and histories helped them to cross boundaries and see things from different perspectives.

Their ideas of culture had previously been developed through discourses about style, musical taste and other symbols associated with various conceptions of youth culture. Thus, for some young people the youth exchange meant that their perspectives changed as they revised their earlier perceptions, while for some young people their perspectives did not change but they did develop or increase their knowledge and understanding of different cultural perspectives.

The youth exchange introduced both the hosting and visiting groups to consideration of what it meant to be young and living in different social and cultural circumstances. They built relationships across cultural boundaries that helped to increase their awareness of difference and of themselves. Cohen (1985) proposed that, in order to value their own culture, people need to stand at the boundary between what is considered normal, and what contradicts normality, in order to become self-aware.

The study suggests that young people formed a series of relationships that were developed and negotiated over time. The changing nature of these

relationships suggested that simply attending the youth project and engaging in pleasantries with youth workers would not in itself lead to an accumulation of positive social capital or to learning about what it means to be a social being. Short term participation might not bring the required investments in time, commitment or obligation that are suggested by Putnam (2000) as important to development of an ongoing project that would help to build and sustain social relationships.

The importance of a particular kind of relationship, as already recognised in youth work literature (Barber, 2007; Robertson, 2005) was interesting in light of concerns raised by Williams (2009) about the fragility of relationships between young people and adults.

> The power of youth work is in the quality of the relationship between the youth worker and the young person…[where]…unlike many other professional relationships, youth work operationalises friendship-type relating styles, overtly pursuing a more equal style of relationship.
>
> Sercombe (2010, p. 24)

This study suggests that in this youth work setting relationships between young people and youth workers were not fragile at all. The study adds empirical evidence to Sercombe's assertion that these relationships were not like other professional relationships by showing how friendship-style connections helped young people to negotiate a series of changing relationships.

In summary, relationships were often started through informal conversations in the youth café and were likened by young people to forming friendships and family relations. These relationships appeared to change over time and involved young people and youth workers in negotiating new power relationships. Through building trust and respect the young people began to understand difference and identify themselves in the social world. Over time spent hanging around the setting, I became increasingly convinced that building trusting relationships with youth workers underpinned the creation of

critical engagements with young people that served as a catalyst in young people's transition towards adulthood. In particular, the development of these relationships provided empirical evidence that the love, care and solidarity dimension of equality, as proposed by Baker et al. (2004) was present in this setting. This evidence also confirmed the importance of relationships in youth work, which was one characteristic in Davies manifesto (2005).

9.2.3 Interpreting volunteering as transition in youth work

The literature review highlighted a stage between childhood and adulthood, often described as a period of stress (Erikson 1968) and a time when young people are confused about their identities or role in society, or where they experience multiple and shifting constructions of the self (Green, 2010). This view was important in discussing how young people's adult identities are developed through their engagement with institutional structures that are part of a life trajectory (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). This section examines one interpretation of how volunteering appeared to assist young people in their transitions towards adulthood.

There was a longstanding tradition of volunteering in this setting. Defined as 'activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause' (Wilson, 2000, p. 215), volunteering is different from recreational or leisure activity 'by ascertaining whether it is possible to pay a third person to conduct the activity in question' (Stadelmann-Steffen and Freitag, 2011, p. 528). In this setting volunteering often began at the level of peer support, as in the informal helping engaged in by Elaine, whose actions appeared to be somewhere on the boundary of leisure, recreation and volunteering. This kind of informal helping could progress to more formal recognition as a volunteer leader. This was apparent in the experiences of Ryan and Sam, who were more clearly engaged in the kind of voluntary activity that, according to Stadelmann-Steffen and Freitag (2011), someone could be paid to conduct.

Defined by Putnam (2000, p. 505) as 'the practice of helping others with no expectation of gain', reciprocity is considered important in motivating people

towards volunteering. Putnam (2000) was interested in how loose ties between people as social actors in social settings appeared to enhance their use of social and cultural resources, and helped improve the quality of their lives. Putnam was concerned about the breakdown of social connectedness, and in particular the decline of community and how this impacted on people's capacity to build and maintain social and cultural networks, that foster trust and reciprocity. In this setting, it appeared that social connectedness and volunteering were important in promoting reciprocity.

The findings show how young people appeared to form new identities through volunteering and participation in youth work. Among the wider community, volunteering is generally assumed to be an adult activity. Yet, in this setting the young people were encouraged to engage in volunteering activity, which could be part of their transition towards becoming adult. For example, in addition to promoting connectedness and reciprocity, being accepted as a volunteer brings positive affirmation of the self, in terms of forming an adult identity, as part of the youth work team. Thus, there is an added return on volunteering that can shift young people's experiences of the self from an existing identity as a young person who is a participant in youth work.

By becoming a voluntary peer educator, the young people were identified as leaders or facilitators of learning, responsible for promoting learning among their peers. In helping to create new knowledge and understanding as a voluntary peer educator, this role appeared to shift the young person from their earlier role as a participant in a peer-led education programme, towards a new conceptualisation of their identity.

As volunteers, young people were involved in consulting, organising, planning, negotiating and developing learning. They said their experiences of volunteering helped them to feel more adult that suggested a shift in their perceptions from being viewed as a young person to being viewed as an adult. In this way, with guidance and support from youth workers, the young people were able to experience what it means to be an adult who is an educator and leader, as distinct from being a young person, who is a learner and follower.

Similarly, for young people in this study who identified as having specific learning needs, volunteering appeared to bring a double benefit in 'normalising' their participation in community or civic life, and in facilitating their transition to adulthood. Young people in the DSG shared the experiential benefits of volunteering and, in addition, it helped them to achieve an identity that was not linked to their needs or abilities but to their capacity and willingness to help others. In this sense, their experiences of volunteering implied that their identities were not constrained by a label of disability.

Thus, volunteering offered more than an altruistic opportunity to reciprocate a kindness; instead, it created capacity for young people to renegotiate their relationships with workers and other young people. This helped them to perceive themselves, for the first time in some instances, as being equal to the other adults, youth workers or young people. Thus, volunteering appeared to create conditions, through which young people learned about becoming adult. Volunteering could thus be conceived as meeting the needs of young people for whom the trajectory to adult life, including further and higher education, working and family life, is not routine. In this sense, volunteering may fill a gap in that trajectory.

Volunteering appeared to offer opportunities to explore alternative social and cultural identities through programmes that appeared to assist young people in clarifying their own identities or roles. This offers a response to young people's aspirations for personal development and perhaps adds to their understanding about equality.

It has been estimated that approximately twenty two million people volunteer in the UK every year (Hudson, 2006). In this setting, involvement in governance and taking on citizenship roles included young people in becoming volunteers which appeared to change their relationships with youth workers and young people. Dinham (2007, p.181) suggests a direct relationship between this kind of deep participation and feelings of well-being. Thus, it may be suggested that volunteering brings potential benefits at the micro-level

of the youth work setting, and also increases capacity for individual feelings of well-being.

Analysis suggests that an ethos of volunteering permeated many aspects of youth work. The young people valued being accepted as volunteers so in this sense it could be that becoming a volunteer helped to facilitate young people's transition to adulthood. Thus, volunteering also appeared to contribute to young people's personal development and enhanced capability in a range of areas of their lives.

This demonstrated the working and learning dimension of equality (Baker et al, 2004) and Davies' (2005) characteristics for youth work as offering new and challenging activity and engaging in creative responses to the world. Volunteering also appeared to sustain young people's participation when otherwise they may have moved away from youth work, by offering them new challenging activities in helping others to engage in youth work so that more people could experience these benefits.

9.2.4 Interpreting youth work as equality work

In chapter seven I examined young people's experiences and perceptions of equality in one youth work setting and in chapter eight, how they learned about equality in this setting. Together these chapters suggest an emancipatory purpose for youth work that adds empirical evidence to the framework proposed by Baker et al. (2004) in terms of how equality of condition might be realised as a means of achieving and sustaining equality, through processes of collective, social and political action. These chapters also added empirical evidence to the manifesto for youth work, proposed by Davies (2005) in terms of how generic youth work offered a means of facilitating learning about equality. This section builds on this analysis to suggest generic youth work as equality work, in terms of an egalitarian purpose.

This study shows how young people used their relationships and micro-level social structures inside the youth work setting to challenge their previous understandings of the world and to become aware of their capacity to change

aspects of their own lives by contributing to for example, to the development of youth policy or cross cultural relations and to achieve their aspirations to perform in a band.

The study identified that young people's perspectives about equality changed or refined over time. By showing how learning was developed through problem posing dialogue and conversations that challenged inequality in the café and other programme areas, the study adds empirical evidence to what Ord (2007) has said in relation to the youth work curriculum:

> Youth work is necessarily critical and aspires towards social as well as individual change and transformation. It is committed to challenging and confronting inequality and not accepting that it is inevitable.
>
> Ord (2007, p. 119)

Thus, learning in youth work, included both content and process that appeared to contribute to improving young people's experiences of, and understanding about, equality and so could be usefully described as equality work.

In arguing that contemporary society is structured in the interests of profit, Baker et al. (2004) suggest that, 'these structures work systematically to generate and reinforce inequality' (p. 41). Yet, as evidenced in this study, the structures in this youth work setting worked to question, challenge and reduce inequalities and appeared to promote equality, thus could again be interpreted as equality work.

Further, while the DSG and youth council exemplified positive experiences of equality, they also provided evidence of hierarchical power structures that could operate in favour of some people more than others to reinforce inequality. Thus, dimensions of equality were found in the setting but sometimes mirrored traditional and hierarchical social structures. Yet, according to the young people, their learning about equality in the youth work setting was different to their experiences in other social contexts. This

highlighted a complexity of relationships that suggested youth work as inherently different to other encounters they experienced.

This was consistent with the role for youth workers suggested by Jeffs and Banks (2010) in creating a safe learning environment where risk-taking and safety-making go hand in hand and because of this, where routine encounters and practices require, 'critical ethical reflection, analysis and dialogue' (p. 20). According to the young people, by coming to youth work they were able to develop understanding of difference and of a wide range of diverse interests that were interpreted as learning about equality. They took action to change their own lives and the lives of others, and some young people believed that they learned about equality in the youth work setting. This added to my argument that youth work could be interpreted as equality work and offered evidence of the working and learning dimensions of equality and the educational elements of youth work. The kind of learning that appeared to facilitate the development of this kind of work is discussed in the next section.

9.3 Interpreting learning in this youth work setting

In order to consider the boundary crossing nature of youth work, this section uses a range of frameworks, to show the variety of theoretical perspectives that can be applied in a generic setting. These perspectives have come from a series of three different frameworks that I used to examine learning in this youth work setting. The section is grounded in my argument that while it is difficult to measure the impact of youth work with any certainty, the logic model may offer an indication of expected final outcomes. Thus, while there is no guarantee of reaching specific outcomes, the young people in this study were able to identify how possibilities for learning were developed in youth work through a flexible curriculum (Milburn et al, 1997) where the direction of practice was always shifting (Davies, 2005).

9.3.1 *Interpreting learning in youth work through social and cultural capital building*

Social capital has largely been developed in light of three key theorists (Coleman 1988, Bourdieu 1991, Putnam 2000). Bourdieu (1991) developed a cultural anthropological theory of social reproduction and was interested in the persistence of social class and other forms of inequality. Coleman (1988) was also interested in inequality but focused on how social capital might explain differences in academic achievement.

Bourdieu took a broader view, to consider how groups used cultural symbols to signify and mark their position within social structures. Findings have already shown how volunteering and participation in the youth council may be suggested as symbols of a counter hegemony and transitions towards adulthood. Bourdieu's (1991) conceptualisation of habitus is helpful in taking discussion forward. Habitus is suggested as a structured set of values or ways of thinking that provide a bridge between subjective agency and objective position, in order to suggest social capital as part of cultural capital.

It appeared that this youth work setting could be a kind of localised habitus with a value base and social structures that encouraged young people to associate with each other, and to work through peer relations to accumulate capitals. As an informal social space, the youth work setting was a place where such loose ties might be developed and there was evidence of young people crossing cultural and age boundaries to form different kinds of relationships.

Young people exemplified this by talking about how their participation in youth work enabled them to make new connections with others and across cultural boundaries. In doing so, they learned by interrogating their beliefs and values and reshaping their perspectives in light of their experiences. Thus, the young people in this setting provided evidence of how they learned by accumulating capitals.

Putnam (2000) and Woolcock (1998) described two types of social capital: bridging capital (inclusive) or bonding capital (exclusive). Bonding capital

holds people together and helps maintain in-group loyalty by reinforcing specific identities and mobilising solidarity, while bridging capital works across social divisions and connects people to external assets, beyond the immediate family. A social capital frame suggests youth work as a place where bonding, and to a lesser extent, bridging capitals were built.

Putnam was also enthusiastic for volunteering and socialising or associating with others as a means of countering corporate power and social apathy. However, Bynner (2007) suggested that while young people engaging in structured leisure time brought benefits in terms of bridging capital, in youth club work which tended to target the most excluded young people, there was a negative effect. Bynner argued that tight bonds and the creation of social norms were 'detrimental to the young people's later prospects'(p. 199). I was interested in these ideas about a negative effect on three counts.

First, Weller (2006) argued that young people's use of social and cultural capitals was largely absent from seminal literature. This suggests a lack of information on young people's uses of capitals, which may be contrary to the focus promoting its value in enhancing educational achievement or transitions to employment. Yet, Davies asserts young people's use of capitals in highlighting the importance of 'peer interactions, experiences and networks…at the very heart of youth work practice' (Davies, 2005, p. 13).

While educational achievements and employment prospects were cited as important by the young people, these were not more important than, for example, developing interpersonal and peer relationships. Accordingly, this positions youth work as seeking to 'at least balance and at times to challenge this preoccupation with individual development and achievement' (Davies, 2005, p.13). Thus, finding out about about each other and how to sustain or conclude peer relationships that had come to an end, were important elements of learning in youth work.

Second, adults may also have appropriated social and cultural capitals to substantiate a single view of young people as a tightly bonded, homogenous group. Yet, the findings suggested this was not the case, as the development of

social and cultural capital appeared to enable young people to connect in new and different ways outside of their bonded friendship groups. Thus, applying a social capital perspective suggests that in this setting young people learned how to use capitals to enable them to flourish and develop a positive sense of self.

Third, I wanted to examine if there was an alternative view to Bynner's position of a negative effect of bonding capital in generic youth club work. I returned to consider Bourdieu's (1991) ideas on social capital as part of cultural capital, in that young people's use of social capital was inextricably linked to the cultural context of their lives, and so their need to acquire and understand cultural capital was an intrinsic part of their use of social and other capitals.

This takes a slightly different view to a literature that argues for social capital to be regarded as a mobilising agent for other capitals (Bassani 2007). Instead, this study suggests that mobilising capital was linked to both social and cultural capitals and to the social and cultural connections the young people made inside the youth work setting. These two capitals appeared to go hand in hand, for example, in crossing boundaries between social friendship and cultural projects or in relationships that crossed youth cultures. Thus, the distinction between social and cultural capitals appeared blurred for the young people in this study.

Bassani (2007) has highlighted that bridging capital happens when someone belongs to more than one group, in this case for example, bridging between the family as their primary or first group, and their peer group as a secondary group, in order to generate new social capital that combines capitals from both family and friends. This could explain the young people's use of social and cultural capitals in the youth work setting. For example, young people were operating on the boundaries between their previous and emerging perceptions of social and cultural life and their changing experiences of equality.

By drawing on their experiences from their first groups, such as family or schooling, it is suggested that young people mobilised those capitals as

resources that facilitated development of capitals in the secondary groups (such as those they encountered in the youth work setting). Yet, it has been proposed that bridging capital does not in itself cause capital to increase, rather 'it provides the group with resources that can be mobilized' (Bassani, 2007, p. 29).

However, this proposal does not explain the apparent capital building effect of cross cultural and social bonding in this youth work setting, for those young people who had a low level of existing, first group capitals. In some instances the peer group may be more usefully regarded as the primary group, for example in Craig's assertion that 'your friends are your family' and among young people whose experiences of schooling. In those instances, learning about how to build bridging capitals across groups appeared important in helping the young people to build as well as bridge capitals across social and cultural groups. This leads me to suggest that learning about use of capitals in youth work acts as compensation for those young people who lack capitals in other areas of their lives.

Weller (2006) has suggested a need to explore how young people acquire social capital to enable them to compensate for a lack of economic capital. This appeared to hold true for the young people involved in the youth exchange who used bridging capital (between themselves and youth workers, or across cultures through Internet connections) and bonding capital (among themselves and with the young people from other countries) to keep the youth exchange affordable and to enhance their personal and collective social and cultural resources.

This offers a counter argument to Bynner's (2007) assertion that youth club work perpetuated negative bonding capital that is detrimental to young people by suggesting his assertion as a problem of definition, in terms of the nature and purpose of youth work. If a narrow or specific definition of youth work for example, as leisure activity or as diversion from prosecution is taken, this argument may hold. However, in this generic setting, youth work appeared to offer a rich site of capital building that was facilitated by learning through social and cultural mixing in many of its day-to-day activities.

This was made possible for the young people in this study through using bridging capitals between social and cultural groups they encountered in the youth work setting, while also drawing on their existing capitals from families, schooling or working life, outside of the setting. These existing capitals were resources the young people could use in their interactions in youth work but they could also compensate for a lack of existing capitals by building social and cultural capitals with different groupings inside the setting. Thus, using capitals to connect across social and cultural boundaries appeared to help young people to learn how to compensate for lack of capitals in other areas of their lives and to strengthen connectedness for learning across social boundaries.

9.3.2 Interpreting youth work as a site for optimal learning

The previous section used the frame of social capital to show how the young people's use of capitals appeared to facilitate learning in youth work. This section offers another in the series of analytical frameworks to show how every day conversations, citizenship activity and group work could be used to create powerful learning where, according to the young people in this study, change could be realised through a range of optimal learning experiences.

Framing powerful learning and optimal experience to create optimal learning.

De Corte,Versgaffel, Entwistle, and Van Merrienboer (2003) and also, Konings, Brand-Gruwel and van Merrienboer (2005), have suggested that powerful learning is created by involving learners in grappling with real problems that are challenging and complex and by involving learners in the process of creating knowledge. This helped to create what De Corte et al., (2003) have called a powerful learning environment, where young people and youth workers learned together. Thus, it was possible to use the paradoxes and contradictions in youth work as a basis for problem posing dialogue.

While the paradoxes in this study could be problematic in illustrating both the liberation and the containment of young people in this setting, they also create

possibilities for learning about power and difference that is real, challenging and complex. This presents opportunities to re-define pedagogical relationships between youth workers and young people to enhance learning by using paradoxes to achieve powerful learning.

Theory and research from positive psychology (Fredrickson, 2001; Seligman, 2002) added to conceptualisations of powerful learning and to Dewey's ideas on experiential learning, by suggesting that optimal experience is achieved through grappling with challenging aspects of life. Csikzentmihaly (1990) suggests that the best moments in our lives, those when we feel most exhilarated and in control, are not those when we are relaxed and passively contemplating the world. Instead our best times are those, 'when our body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and wonderful' (Csikzentmihaly, 2002, p. 3).

Csikzentmihaly called this optimal experience, flow. It happens when we have worked hard to make something happen that enables us to feel we have participated in the content of life. If a learning task is set in which the learner has a low skills level and this is coupled to a high degree of challenge, this will result in anxiety. A low skills level and a low challenge will result in apathy, while a high skills level and a low degree of challenge will result in boredom. Thus, to maintain participation an appropriate match of skills to the level of challenge is important to the development of a satisfactory learning exchange.

This was evident in the challenges faced by youth councillors, who were involved in planning and preparation of presentations and contributed to dialogue about youth issues. The challenges were adapted to suit various skill levels. For example, young people made presentations to elected members and council officials. Some found the level of challenge appropriate but for others the same challenge would have been difficult or off putting, so a range of tasks and challenges was offered to suit individual learning interests and capabilities.

Every youth councillor was involved, learned new skills and was challenged to an appropriate degree. In this way, youth workers judgment and

encouragement helped to foster a positive learning experience, rather than promote anxiety. They were able to negotiate with individual young people to ensure an interesting and 'stretching' level of challenge. Thus, the levels of skill and challenge experienced by the young people involved in the setting could be considered as appropriate to the generation of flow experiences. This was achieved in an environment where powerful learning was developed by grappling with real, challenging and complex problems. In this sense, I suggest that optimal experience combined with powerful learning to create optimal learning. The remainder of this section examines three kinds of youth work activity that were evident in this setting and contributed to young people's optimal learning experiences.

Learning through involvement and citizenship activity

The literature review cites a seminal text by McAlister-Brew (1943) who identified the youth club as a society that was not concerned with the micro-level issues of organised activity or individual behaviour, but rather was concerned with a society where everyone was important and could contribute to the life of the social group. She suggested that the club leader was no more important than the club member, and that youth work was about good citizenship, self-governance and democracy

More recently, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE, 2003) highlighted the importance of youth work to improving citizenship and democracy and current thinking on youth work for citizenship confirms this position (Fyfe, 2010 p. 69; Wood, 2009, p. 141). The Citizenship Foundation (2012) envisions:

> a fair, inclusive and cohesive society…[in]…a democracy in which people have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to take part and drive change as effective citizens, both as individuals and as communities.
>
> Citizenship Foundation (2012)

The Foundation has suggested that citizenship for young people builds confidence and facilitates decision making and participation in life at both personal and community levels.

In Scotland, citizenship for young people is defined as the ‘capability for thoughtful and responsible participation in political, economic, social and cultural life’ (Jamieson, 2001, p. 2). At a micro-level, contributing to the political, economic, social and cultural life of this youth work setting, young people’s citizenship roles were developed, for example, through involvement in the youth council, peer-education project, fund raising activity and volunteering in the café. Each of these offered challenging and real problems that facilitated learning among those young people involved. Thus, it could be argued that optimal learning for citizenship was embedded in many aspects of the youth work setting.

Yet, the question of whether the level of citizenship activity and learning was about ‘ticking the boxes and missing the point’ (Batsleer, 2008, p. 141) remains difficult to answer. The findings have suggested elements of truth in considering the youth council as a new form of participatory democracy but considering it as a catalyst for individual learning may be a more secure analysis. Similarly, where the ‘point’ is about learning, the youth council, volunteering and peer education project appear to offer a range of opportunities for learning, however, a lack of critical dialogue about power hierarchies and participatory politics within the setting, may miss a wider ‘point’ about social and democratic purpose.

Discussion of optimal learning in three types of group

Preston-Shoot (2007) identified nine categories of groups that are present in a variety of settings where people work together to achieve anti-oppressive practices. He suggests three of these categories are typical in youth work.

- Social groups were categorised by what they do and how participants build skills or improve feelings of self-worth. Preston-Shoot (2007, p. 51) identified youth clubs as an example of this type of group.

- Educational groups were categorised as having a role in informing participants and in helping them prepare for changing life circumstances, by encouraging them to engage in shared learning where 'emphasis is usually on developing abilities and behaviours and identifying strengths and resilience which have been underused or not needed previously' (Preston-Shoot, 2007, p. 53).

- Self-directed groups were also identified by Preston-Shoot (2007, p. 56) who suggested these 'may be problem-centred…[where]… members work together and find their own solutions'.

These categories suggested that in youth work young people meet and socialise in groups but, according to Preston-Shoot, they also join groups that facilitate their education. I wondered about whether working in groups could add to young people's capacity for optimal experience and human flourishing (Fredrickson, 2001).

My observation of band rehearsals showed this capacity for one group to build optimal learning. As an example of a self-directed group, I observed the same band rehearsing for over six weeks. On the surface, it appeared to engage in largely similar activity with no direct youth worker intervention. Yet, on closer observation, the level of challenge was increasing all of the time, as the band struggled to perfect performance and to find twists in chord choice, or in vocals, that they believed made their sound different to other bands. Whether they were having fun was not always apparent. There were tensions and fall-outs when things didn't go well, and sometimes their partners, who were there to offer moral support, seemed quite bored by sitting on the sidelines. Yet, the sessions ended in smiles and talk about 'next time' or where they were going later that night. All of which suggested that, as a self-directed group, they did enjoy rehearsals and that the level of challenge, while frustrating and difficult, appeared to enhance their enjoyment of the activity, and its capacity to improve performance.

I have already shown examples of project-based and specialist group work activity that included a range of purposes, in bringing people together to share experiences and ideas, or to challenge and revise meaning or understanding of their lives and of their social contexts. These were based on data gathered from what young people told me and my observations of them. I identified each of Preston-Shoot's categories of group as offering potential for optimal learning:

- *Social Groups*

In this setting, I suggest that groups such as the strategic gaming group or the drama group were within this category. This type of group included opportunities for learning about a specific interest. They also provided opportunities for wider learning, such as, working with others, building confidence or securing funding but these opportunities were largely secondary to the main focus of the group.

- *Educational Groups*

In this setting, I suggest that groups such as the democracy project, the international exchange and the youth council were within this category.

Educational groups included planned learning, as distinct from learning as a by-product of recreational activity. In educational groups, the intention was to develop young people's knowledge, understanding and increased capacity in relation to specific interests or to personal development. For example, the democracy group and youth council were explicit in their purpose of helping young people to consider their rights and entitlements, in order to build knowledge and skills in asserting their rights and to articulate their views. In addition to experiences of international travel, the youth exchanges facilitated young people's learning about difference in their own and other cultures, and how to work together to plan events and raise funds.

- *Self-directed Groups*

In this setting, the Disability Sports Group (DSG) or young carers exemplified this type of group. While these groups were formed by external agencies or the youth work team, their creation was part of a wider network of groups that operated across a geographical or country-wide area. For example, the DSG was run in association and partnership with local volunteers, at local authority and UK level, as part of the Federation of Disability Sports. A young carers project was also part of a similar network of local and national developments in care and social welfare. Each of these groups developed their own programme and engaged in fund raising activity outwith the setting, with support, but not led by, youth workers and as such, they could be regarded as self-directed groups.

Checking these three categories of group against Davies characteristics for youth work, suggested that all three offered opportunities of relaxation, fun and to varying degrees, offered capacity for young people to experience new and challenging activities. In this way, groups and group work contributed to the working and learning dimension of equality and the characteristic for youth work as offering new and challenging educational activities (Baker et al, 2004; Davies, 2005).

Informal and Conversational Learning

I have already shown how findings supported the view that in youth work learning was achieved through informal conversation. Yet, the extent to which conversations could be claimed as optimal learning depended on many things: the starting point of the young person; the disposition and receptiveness of the both the young person and the worker to grapple with problems; the contemporary nature of the topic; the level of skill involved in the activity and the autonomy of the worker in developing learning opportunities, as and when they arise; the skills and autonomy of the worker in judging when to let go or increase the level of challenge and to change tack if their initial ideas fell flat (Batsleer, 2008; Csikzentmihaly, 2002; Jeffs and Smith, 2005).

The findings suggested the café as a place where it appeared that all of these dependent factors could be combined and the possibility for learning was always in view. Thus, in this setting, the use of informal conversational learning appeared to be a deliberate and planned process that responded to different starting points and a varied level of challenge. For example, in asking questions while playing pool or guitar hero, in asking to join, or being invited to join the conversations young people were already having, and in grasping learning opportunities that presented in the setting.

I also witnessed minor disagreements that were different in their level of challenge, disruption and in the time needed to resolve matters. For example, disputes around the pool table were common and required 'a fairly low-key intervention where language started to get prejudicial' Sercombe (2010, p. 158). The point here being that the focus of intervention was not about punishing the young people rather, it was about helping them to understand that in life, some actions or behaviours were not conducive to social cohesion and that real problems could be encountered as a result.

In this setting, youth workers took clear stance in not accepting abuse on grounds of difference yet, building on positive relationships, their conversations moved beyond instruction, to create boundary crossing opportunities for optimal learning. Had relationships in the setting been based on historical, hierarchical relations of power, such opportunities might not have been realised. By instructing young people to change behaviour, responses could be learned but not fully understood. Instead, I observed youth workers routinely engaging in critical and problem posing conversations that involved young people in learning for understanding, rather than simply learning to comply with demands, or seek approval from, youth workers.

Workers routinely explained their reasons for asking the young people to do certain things, or to modify behaviour. Throughout fieldwork phase of this study I saw only two people being 'removed' from the setting, once was for fighting and once for appearing to have consumed alcohol prior to arriving at the facility. In each case, the workers took a firm line in asking the young

people to leave, but remained calm and reassuring in emphasising that, if they refrained from this kind of behaviour in future, they would be welcomed back.

However, this kind of response was balanced by stories the young people told about times when youth workers appeared to react in a more authoritarian way and demanded particular behaviour change or sought a predetermined outcome. When they told these stories, most were followed with a 'confession' that their behaviour had been out of order, or they could at least see where the worker was coming from.

Interestingly, Batsleer (2008) has also suggested that humour can be a useful way of building connections between youth workers and young people, or between young people and other young people. However, she also suggests that put-downs and use of gendered banter or name-calling are also a good way of attracting youth workers attention by young people who understand that because practice is non-discriminatory and non-violent the worker will take notice of them. Batsleer suggests, 'the wind-up is a form of engagement …[where]…negative attention is better than none' (Batsleer, 2008, p. 73).

By being aware of the prejudices enacted in banter or put-downs, youth workers appeared to be skilled in appropriately challenging discriminating discourse and in this way most workers engaged indirectly, if not directly, in dialogue with young people about equality or inequality. Yet, as human beings, youth workers are themselves subject to prejudice and also bring their own prejudices to practice. They need to be aware of these and consider how their actions may mitigate conversational interventions. Batsleer (2008, p. 74) exemplifies this in identifying a dichotomy, for example, where a female worker seeks to challenge gender inequality but relies on male colleagues to respond to issues of conflict. In this study this was exemplified in some workers using aggressive or bullish language to challenge put-downs that young people directed towards someone else. Thus, learning to learn and facilitating optimal learning relied on many things, including conversation and problem posing, judgment, rapport and humour, which I suggest are combined in a critical approach to pedagogy as discussed in the next section.

9.3.3 Interpreting youth work as critical pedagogy

I have already suggested critical pedagogy, with its roots in Freire's conceptualisation of education as a potentially important concept in youth work literature, where a prominent range of literature has been influenced by Freire's work on liberating education (Batsleer, 2008; Martin 2001, Spence, Devanney and Noonan 2006, Tett, 2010). I now suggest critical pedagogy as a means of achieving optimal learning in youth work.

Freire proposed critical pedagogy as an alternative to a banking model of education which he suggested had resulted in a situation where 'the more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world' (Freire,1996, p. 54). This kind of education is proposed as praxis, which is understood as, 'action and reflection upon the world in order to change it' (Anglas Grande, 2009, p. 206). To reflect upon the world we need to understand it. We need to see the historical constructions of power and the dominant culture in relationship to the everyday cultural experiences of people who are subordinate to those in power (McLaren, 2009).

As noted earlier, the banking model positions the teacher as an expert and the learner as ignorant. Thus, banking education puts the teacher in control of what is learned, in a, 'ready-to- wear approach…[that]…serves to obviate thinking' (Freire,1996, p. 57). Taking a critical and problem-posing approach means that teachers and learners work together to create knowledge and understanding. In this way, the teacher is also a learner and the learner is also a teacher. Becoming conscious, not only of the world and the way knowledge is produced, but of our own capacities to produce new knowledge, and to change the world, is therefore a core element of critical pedagogy.

Envisioning a hopeful future for young people by framing education in the here and now focuses on real world situations as the means of raising consciousness and understanding. It emphasises humanisation and the capacities of people to act in fellowship and solidarity, with each other. This

may appear contradictory to the creation of personalised flow experiences. This makes the role of youth workers critical in ensuring the creation of a balanced learning environment that builds on these capacities for fellowship and solidarity, yet also facilitates an appropriate level of individual challenge. The creation of a safe learning environment has been suggested as foundational to ethical youth work practice (Jeffs and Banks, 2010). Consequently, routine youth work practice, that seeks to raise consciousness and understanding of potentially sensitive issues, requires, ‘critical ethical reflection, analysis and dialogue’ (Banks, 2010, p. 20).

Although not explicitly promoted as critical pedagogy, the problem posing approach taken in this youth work setting could be suggested as promoting critical pedagogy. Similarly, by promoting dialogue young people were able to reconsider aspects of their own identities and appeared to become conscious to their experiences of cultural difference, and their perceptions of how social and cultural symbols framed their understandings of, for example, ability or religious belief. Preparation for the youth exchange helped those involved to consider and appreciate how religious or cultural symbols and experiences, informed their judgments about others.

However, they also suggested that these symbols alone did not shape their understanding of themselves or the visiting group. By considering their views about visiting groups, they were able to interrogate assumptions about how people were labeled on grounds of perceived ‘fit’ with particular stereotypes of social groups, or historical understandings. In this sense, youth work appeared to facilitate powerful learning that challenged personal and social constructions of the world.

Through critical and problem posing dialogue, the young people in the youth exchange were encouraged to engage in a Freirian type decoding of symbols of religious and cultural difference to consider alternative meanings or interpretations. This process of decoding helped them to develop an understanding that other perspectives were possible. They could identify the family, schooling, media and peers as complex and intersecting influences on their experiences.

In this sense, the process and dialogue associated with preparing for the youth exchange involved young people in optimal learning experiences that matched an appropriate level of challenge with complex problems that enabled young people to consider how their own ethnic, religious, ability-led or age-related identities were developed, and how they made judgments about others. In turn, this involved them in reconsidering how repeated participation in religious and cultural rituals might inform their sense of self (McCall, 2005; Reynolds, 2007), and that changing these rituals could bring changes in thinking about difference and create new form of knowledge.

Analysis has shown that ongoing dialogue and problem posing was evident across many areas of the youth work curriculum. Thus, a critical pedagogy appeared to be used to create conditions through which the young people could produce new forms of knowledge or understanding. These were not only about the norms and values of society or how symbols were used to make meaning (Cohen, 1985). Rather, new knowledge and understanding appeared to facilitate transformation of their ideas and generated learning that enabled the young people to read the world, and themselves, differently (Freire, 1970;1976; Giroux, 2005).

This different reading of the world involved the young people in challenge, conversation and reflective thinking. When this happened, it appeared that on a small scale, their interpretation and understanding of themselves and of social and cultural differences was enhanced. Although learning in this setting was not promoted as critical pedagogy, elements of Freirian pedagogy incorporating problem posing dialogue, critical conversation and decoding processes, appeared to add to the young people's existing repertoire of resources and skills on which they could draw, in order to learn about equality. However, more research would be needed to explore this in more detail.

9.4 The negotiated nature of youth work

This section discusses the negotiated nature of youth work. The concept of negotiation featured in responses across all five of the study's objectives but I could find no youth work literature about the concept of negotiation in a

generic setting. However, given Dewey's interest in the transactional nature of experiential learning, it was that Sokolova and Szpacowicz (2007) suggested 'negotiation is a process in which two or more parties aim to settle what each shall give and take in a transaction between them' (p. 471). They also suggest that negotiators use a variety of strategies such as argument, appeal or demonstration to achieve their goals. Further, Gardiner (2000) has identified a benefit in approaching negotiations in a variety of different ways so that new ideas can be viewed from different perspectives, and goes on to suggest an advantage using a variety of intelligences to take negotiations forward.

These ideas on transaction and taking a varied approach, underpinned my interest in the concept of negotiation in youth work. Thus, in addition to conclusions that were discussed in earlier chapters I found that negotiated elements of practice, based on transactions between young people and youth workers and that took a range of formats or approaches, also helped frame conclusions about the youth work setting.

This section is developed in three parts. First, it shows the negotiated nature of attendance and participation in this setting. Next, it suggests negotiated volunteering as identity formation and then problematises the idea of negotiated outcomes and outputs. Finally, it identifies five stages of negotiation that appeared to be present in this youth work setting and could be used to consider equality work in generic youth work.

9.4.1 The negotiated nature of attendance and participation in this youth work setting

As shown in the literature review, the voluntary principle is regarded as an essential feature of educational youth work practice (Davies, 2005; Jeffs and Smith, 2010; Robertson, 2005; Spence et al., 2007). Yet, I have already shown that this study suggests youth work as primarily a process of negotiated, rather than voluntary, attendance and participation.

It is argued in literature that because young people are free to come and go as they please, the voluntary principle means they can exercise power, in deciding whether or not to attend (Davies, 2005; Spence, 2004; Spence et al,

2006). This perpetuates the idea that if the voluntary principle is compromised, then what is happening cannot be identified as youth work. It follows that, because power ultimately sits with young people, in their decision to attend:

> The development of negotiated relationships between young people and youth workers, based on mutual respect is a defining feature. In the process of relationship building, the emphasis is upon the active participation of young people.
>
> Spence et al, (2006, p. 1)

This idea of negotiated relationships, based on mutual respect, was important in this study, because it highlighted that the voluntary principle cannot be assumed, or taken for granted, and that building relationships with young people involved the active participation of young people in a process of negotiation. This suggested a range of possibilities for configuring relations, which were not only based on voluntary engagement.

When the young people in this study chose to attend, their reasons were found to be complex. Often, their decision to attend was based on factors such as what their friends were doing or whether they had money, which meant attendance was not entirely voluntary. Thus, rather than hold firm to the voluntary principle, an alternative view of negotiated attendance may be possible. This raises important issues for youth work policy and practice.

For example, Ord (2009a) has questioned what a prescriptive and non-negotiable view of the voluntary principle might mean for other forms of practice in, for example, schools or prisons. Ord (2009a) notes that, while attending voluntarily may be the best possible condition for youth work, there are circumstances in which this may not be possible and so practitioners need to be open to other possibilities for youth work, outside of those ‘ideal’ conditions.

Merton et al. (2004) have suggested that the increase in targeted youth work, where young people may be referred to attend by other agencies, means that

‘youth workers are increasingly required to negotiate young people's involvement in order to retain their voluntary involvement’ (Merton, et al., 2004, p. 15). Thus, even when arguing for the voluntary principle they highlight the importance of negotiation. My analysis suggests that, based on mutual respect, negotiation could be just as critical to the relationship forming process as voluntary attendance, and perhaps even more so.

Examining the contribution that negotiation makes to attendance and participation in this youth work setting, this research adds an important component that has not been discussed in youth work literature. By emphasising the importance of negotiation a co-operative process is revealed. This was important in this study, because co-operation was found to be part of young people’s negotiations with youth workers and so impacted on their experiences of equality in the setting. In those instances when the voluntary principle is compromised, so long as the negotiations on which the youth work is built remains as a co-operative power sharing endeavour, then I propose that practice can still be configured as youth work.

This suggests that qualified youth workers could extend the reach of an emancipatory youth work by working for change in settings where the voluntary principle is compromised. By working in practice communities where the voluntary principle is compromised, for example because the young people have been referred or required to attend, the scope of youth work could be widened in an affirming and positive way because relationships between young people and adults, in those settings, could be transformed. For example, this could involve shifting power relationships in places where an uneven distribution of power was present at the outset.

However, there are risks associated with such a strategy. For example, a widening of scope might contribute to the further erosion of professional youth work as currently configured in the UK. If youth workers are operating in areas outwith a non-formal educational value base, then youth work may be reduced to an ‘approach’ that could be developed by anyone involved in working with young people. There is also a danger, as previously noted, that youth work becomes a leisure activity and loses its critical and emancipatory

edge. Further, in times of financial constraint, youth work jobs may be lost, to fund new posts in areas such as schools or prisons, where historically there has been a higher level of financial investment.

Finally, there are no guarantees that by shifting youth workers into those areas where the voluntary principle is compromised changes in distribution of power would be effective. Indeed, a disproportionate ratio of qualified youth workers to other professionals may produce a stronger assertion of a negative view of power, rather than an anticipated increase in power-sharing.

Yet, if we aspire to create a more equal and fairer democratic society, Baker et al. (2005) suggest that we need to consider ways of bringing about radical social change. The extension of power-sharing youth work practice could contribute to a level of social change that addresses issues of age-based discrimination against young people. Similarly, working in areas where the voluntary principle is compromised, youth workers might maximise opportunities to make the current distribution of power visible. In doing so, taken-for-granted or common sense ideas about age could be challenged in order to change perspectives. However, more research would be needed, across a variety of settings, to fully examine what this might mean for understanding and the development of youth work.

9.4.2 Negotiated volunteering as identity formation

This study shows a conceptualisation of volunteering as an act of transition. It appeared that some transitions were more difficult than others, depending on individual circumstances. While youth work may contribute to the transition from school to work or from child to adult, through jobs access or parenting programmes, these were part of a wider intersecting process of identity formation, and so could not be claimed as youth work specific.

The study suggests that by acting together with youth workers, young people who had experienced difficult identity transitions were able to negotiate and experience new status as volunteers, and this contributed to their formation of a young adult identity. Those who became volunteers said they felt equal to

some workers, and were confident about taking decisions or developing programmes.

In the early stages of the study, some young people suggested that they lacked confidence or were involved as participants rather than equals in developing programmes. Yet, later they suggested that their relationships and roles changed as they took increased responsibility and became involved as volunteers. This suggests that learning to co-operate through a process of negotiation encouraged and supported young people into volunteering. Negotiated volunteering could therefore reasonably be added to Davies' (2005) characteristics for youth work.

This idea of negotiated volunteering contributes to arguments proposed by Jeffs and Smith (2010) that the survival of youth work depends on the voluntary sector: if volunteering is promoted in youth work it could be argued that this disposition would strengthen the future of the voluntary sector by increasing volunteering capacity. Yet, they also note that current approaches to commissioning of services, where the voluntary sector is increasingly tied to specific funding programmes and political ideologies, means that the voluntary sector alone 'cannot deliver in relation to social justice and the formation of a more egalitarian and fairer society' (Jeffs and Smith, 2010, p. 16). They go on to highlight the need for more radical social change and wider public engagement.

This study contributes to those arguments on two levels. First, it suggests that negotiated volunteering enhances capacity for the survival of youth work. For example, negotiated volunteering might increase capacity for young people to become youth workers themselves and so pass on the skills and practices they have learned across statutory and voluntary sectors. In this way, negotiated volunteering in youth work could help to maintain an egalitarian purpose, and contribute, on a limited scale, to bringing about the levels of social change required for equality of condition to be realised. This could bring implications for the formal education and qualification of youth workers. For example, the role of volunteering and the voluntary sector in bringing about social change could become more prominent in qualifying programmes.

Second, negotiated volunteering in youth work may also foster volunteering and wider engagement in community, now and in later life. The young people who remained involved in this study to the second interviews were all involved in volunteering as young councillors, young leaders or peer educators in the youth work setting. One interpretation of this could be that negotiated volunteering sustained their engagement in youth work, beyond a time when they might otherwise have outgrown it. This prolonged period of participation in the setting introduced them to new social and civic roles. The young people suggested that volunteering helped them to build and sustain relationships and emerging identities and seemed to enhance their sense of well-being and connections with society and each other.

In this sense, findings contribute to understanding how youth work might help young people to acquire social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991; Putnam, 2000), by considering how they were able to build connectivity in this setting. However, more detailed research on the building of capitals in a generic youth work setting would be needed in order to consider this further.

9.4.3 Negotiation of outcomes and outputs

If we accept that educational youth work is grounded in conversation and dialogue with a liberating and emancipatory purpose (Batsleer, 2008; Spence et al., 2006) and that the findings of this study contribute to understanding that equality is indeed a fundamental value-base for youth work, how do we reconcile current drives to measure specific outcomes and outputs with this emancipatory drive?

This study has shown that negotiation with young people is an important part of youth work practice. If, as findings suggest, youth work is grounded in a value base that puts young people first, tips the balance of power in their direction, and creates equality of condition as the basis for changed social relations, this raises a questions about how we can establish outcomes or outputs, in advance of those negotiations. While the logic model can be applied to planning or projecting outcomes it is perhaps also worth considering

whether these negotiations, or processes of negotiation, are outcomes in themselves.

Yet, we also need to evaluate youth work, for example, in order to improve practice, to check that what we are doing is working and meets young people's expectations for fun, or to secure funding and demonstrate value for money.

It is important for generic youth work, with equality at its core, to demonstrate its value by engaging in rigorous practice based research. The lack of critical mass in youth work research is a problem (Spence, 2007). While there is evidence that research mindedness is being cultivated, new ways of theorising and measuring the benefits of youth work are needed, in order to respond to the diverse range of practices that could be, and increasingly are, described as youth work. Some of these do lend themselves to ways of measuring that are currently in place. However, if a social and democratic purpose is part of our configuration of youth work, then alternative measures are required in order to understand the range of benefits that contribute to value in youth work.

Such measures could, for example, build on the negotiated nature of practice by engaging young people in determining how youth work might be judged as successful or beneficial. Young people involved in youth work are able to make such judgments because they have relevant experience of the programmes and practices that are to be judged (Rudestam and Newton, 2007). Thus, young people can help judge the veracity of claims that might otherwise be masked by using measures that are easy to quantify but may miss important aspects of the work, such as the processes of youth that are developed or negotiated over a prolonged period of time.

Although young people were not asked to assess the value of youth work in this study, they did articulate many benefits from their experiences of equality in the setting, and commented positively on processes and relationships associated with their learning about equality. The study shows that negotiation was at the heart of this process and that through their negotiations of attendance, culture, power and social experiences, the young people learned about difference, about the world, and about their own selves.

In addition to relying on external funders to produce criteria, it may be that young people who participate in youth work are very well placed to assess its value. For example, in assessing the value of their experiences or in assessing the value of programmes they are not directly involved in.

There is already anecdotal evidence of how HMIE inspections involve young people in focus groups and meet with young people in youth work settings in Scotland, in order to gain their views on youth learning in community settings. Inspections are seen as a chance to talk with young people in informal settings by chatting in corridors or having lunch together (HMIE, 2011). Thus, it may be worth pursuing and extending this to involve young people as lay assessors across disciplinary areas, but more research is needed to show how this could add to current inspection frameworks.

The young people in this study also appeared to appreciate that sometimes there were constraints on what was possible, but through problem posing dialogue and critical conversations, they were able to negotiate new or changed outcomes. Thus, in addition to the negotiated starting point for attendance as an alternate position to the voluntary principle, it may be that greater emphasis on the negotiated nature of practice and power relations in youth work facilitates relationships that are different from young people's previous relationships on the streets or in schools and leisure facilities.

In light of this, the study suggests that negotiated outcomes are possible, if the starting point for those negotiations is the young person and when there is a power sharing ethos within the youth work setting. It further suggests that the processes of negotiation could become valuable outcomes of youth work.

9.4.4 Five Stages of negotiation in this youth work setting

In earlier chapters the negotiated nature of youth work practice became apparent in my analysis of this youth work setting. Processes of negotiation appear to have a natural history in youth work. Young people do not simply decide to attend or to become volunteers overnight, their decisions are routinely based on a series of transactions that are negotiated with their friends

or youth workers in the setting. This study suggests that these transactions were not uniform and I have identified five stages in the process of negotiating new roles and relationships with each other and with youth workers.

These five stages were generated through two parallel processes that led to a final stage review of findings. First, when revising sections of my thesis in order to publish findings, I could see that young people did not always negotiate their relationships in the same way. Second, when explaining aspects of the study during conference presentations, I used examples of how they used different ways of negotiating their roles and relationships to illustrate how they had changed over time, or learned about equality. In this way, negotiation was shown as an important part of the process of relationship building and personal development.

Consequently, I conducted a final stage review of each of the discussion chapters. I did this by reading them over again, this time looking for evidence of young people's negotiations with each other and with youth workers. This final stage analysis suggested that regardless of the various strategies adopted by young people during those transactions, for example in presenting a coherent argument, asserting a belief or providing tangible evidence, there appeared to be commonality in staging the negotiation process.

This process enabled me to identify five stages of negotiation as conflict, challenge, change, consciousness and co-operation:

- **Conflict** was experienced in the early stages of participation in this setting, when their relationships with other young people and youth workers were tested. For example, when they were spoken to about their behaviour they sometimes talked back to staff or used put downs on others and this appeared to create conflict and tension in their relationships.

- **Challenge** was experienced when young people engaged in activities with people they had not previously engaged with, or when they participated in new activities, which called into question their existing

world view. For example, when they befriended people from another country or whose abilities were different to their own, this challenged their hitherto understanding of the world and their connections with others in it.

- **Change** was experienced when the level of challenge caused them to change their opinion, behaviour or world view. For example, when they changed from running around for a laugh or to attract youth worker attention to sitting with youth workers, engaged in serious conversations about life, work, and the future.

- **Consciousness** was raised and experienced when young people were empowered to build their own ideas and to take responsibility for their own and collective actions. For example, when they became aware of their capacity to engage in decision making that could lead to social action, or micro-level change.

- **Co-operation** was experienced when their relationships with youth workers or young people shifted towards power-sharing, and they acted together for a common purpose. For example, in working together to raise funds or develop programmes when young people became volunteers or peer educators.

These five elements can be seen as stages in a negotiated youth work process that might be an important feature in facilitating the formation of young people's identities or in their development of agency. These five stages of negotiation could also be important in facilitating connections across boundaries on three levels: among young people with each other; between young people and youth workers; between interest areas in youth work or that young people have identified in their lives. Thus, understanding how relationships are negotiated in youth work is suggested as important to developing and asserting capacity for boundary crossing.

Yet, in identifying five stages in negotiation, this does not mean these are easy to predict or measure. For example, some young people took longer than others to negotiate a connection with young people they regarded as different to themselves, or to become a volunteer or to decide this was not something they wanted to do. Thus, instead of being fixed or linear, these stages are intended as a flexible scaffold on which to build relationships in youth work. Despite recognising difficulty in predicting these stages in negotiation, they could be indicators of progression towards new roles or understandings.

For example, applying the logic model, if young people are observed negotiating new social connections in youth work by working across cultural boundaries, or becoming a peer educator, it could be argued that youth work makes a contribution to enhancing young people's capacity for social connectedness in future. By recognising shifting levels of conflict, challenge, change, consciousness and co-operation it could be possible for young people to reflect on progress and to decide on how to negotiate future transactions in their relationships. In this sense, learning the processes of negotiation could be suggested as an outcome of youth work that could, in the longer term, also respond to the need for wider public engagement by scaffolding the kind of social and democratic connectedness that is needed for equality of condition to be realised.

The idea of negotiation as a scaffold for relationships and social connectedness in youth work is missing in research literature. However, the voluntary principle is often used to suggest that quantitative measures can be applied to valuing youth work, on grounds that there is value in the number of people who have freely chosen to attend. Yet, if attendance is negotiated, the voluntary principle can be grounded in a transactional relationship which suggests a qualitative basis for measuring how these transactions are negotiated in order to sustain participation in youth work. Thus, different measures are needed to show the value of youth work. A 'negotiation principle' could offer a flexible way of thinking about youth work engagement processes, particularly in those settings where participation is not entirely voluntary.

Yet, simply having a negotiation principle in place does not guarantee new measurement methods and there is always the possibility of quantifying the number of 'transactions' as a measure of the negotiation process. Thus, the value of youth work is perhaps not best served by taking either quantitative or qualitative positions. More creative forms of mixed method measurement are needed, in order to understand the value of complex forms of youth work, where participation may be voluntary or negotiated, or based on a combination of boundary crossing practices.

By assuming an emancipatory and democratic purpose for youth work, perhaps it is not surprising that sometimes it has been misunderstood and misappropriated for purposes that are not central to this core value base (Davies, 2005; Harland and Morgan, 2006). Prior to this study, there was no analysis of the value that young people placed on learning about equality in a generic youth work setting.

While equality, social justice and human rights appeared important, there was no research within youth work literature, on which to inform understanding of this important aspect of generic youth work practice. It follows that youth workers and young people might currently be involved in, or under some pressure to account for and measure, elements of youth work that are at best not central to, and at worst ignore, practice in critical social and democratic purpose.

In youth work policy and practice, there is an over-emphasis on what and how practice and services are developed. Yet, these findings suggest that young people's experiences of equality in generic youth work are developed through a series of negotiated relationship that add to current literature by offering a 'negotiation principle' that could be helpful in those contexts where the voluntary principle, as suggested by Davies (2005) and Jeffs and Smith (2010) and others, is compromised.

This negotiation principle implies that, while it is important to understand what and how youth work is developed, it is also important to understand why youth work is developed. The five stages of negotiation add to the love, care

and solidarity dimensions of equality of condition proposed by Baker et al. (2004) by placing young people at the heart of those negotiations. While co-operation, by shifting towards power sharing, adds to the power dimension they propose (Baker et al., 2004).

These findings are important within the context of current funding regimes that divert youth workers from practice development towards securing funding (Harland and Morgan, 2006). The five stages of negotiation appear to strengthen youth work's emancipatory purpose by offering a framework for empowering young people through a negotiated, rather than pre-determined or adult-led process.

If the five stages of negotiation hold good in other youth work settings, it may be that, investing in youth work is an investment in young person centred negotiations, which may bring different outcomes depending on the starting point, aspirations and capacities of those involved. In such circumstances, outputs and outcomes cannot be fully determined by people or agencies that operate outside of that process. However, more research is needed to examine how the five stages of negotiation might be applied or developed in other youth work settings.

Thus, any drive to measure the short-term outputs of youth work is only part of the story and does not fully capture the value or value base of youth work. Rather a variety of measures are needed, which can incorporate elements of 'number crunching' and also of how logical thinking can be applied to existing evidence to draw conclusions about the contribution of youth work to future outcomes.

Chapter summary

This chapter has examined findings in relation to the three research questions in order to strengthen claims that youth work is a boundary crossing pedagogy and to consider the negotiated nature of youth work. I have done this by drawing on a range of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives which, according to Leeuw (2012), is needed in order to ensure that my arguments are

plausible. I have also shown how findings appear to be aligned to the combined theoretical frameworks of equality of condition (Baker et al., 2004) and a manifesto for youth work (Davies, 2005).

The chapter offers my interpretation of youth work as boundary crossing pedagogy that is most often practiced as a voluntary endeavour built on an alternative discourse and a youth work curriculum that is valued by young people. It was clear from what the young people said about their experiences of equality and of learning, that generic youth work may be interpreted as an emancipatory practice. The young people suggested their learning about equality was facilitated through a series of practices that could be described as boundary crossing.

When combined these practices appeared to contribute to young people's learning about equality and as such, add to knowledge in equality studies and youth work. In this sense, the question I have identified on why youth work is developed could be directly linked to a question of whether youth work could be described as part of a wider discourse for equality work and social justice.

Finally, the chapter has discussed the negotiated nature of youth work and examined how this contributed to their participation, identity formation and the development of outcomes or outputs. This analysis showed five stages of negotiation that were identified in this setting and conceptualised a negotiation principle that could be important in thinking about youth work that is developed in settings where the voluntary principle is compromised. This discussion has enabled me to draw conclusions that are developed in the following chapter.

10. Conclusions and Implications for policy, practice and research

Chapter Outline

This chapter reflects on the research process that I used to develop conclusions about young people's perceptions and experiences of equality in one generic youth work setting. The chapter also outlines a number of conclusions that are drawn from my analysis and discussion of findings. Finally, the implications of these conclusions in terms of policy and practice are identified, and future research questions that have arisen from this study are suggested.

10.1 Reflecting on research methods, ethical dilemmas and my position as researcher

It is important to reflect on the research process in order to consider the lessons learned and what I could do differently, given the chance (Bell, 1999). Ethnographic research encourages development of a process that builds on 'the subjective experiences…[and perspectives]…of both participants and investigator…[to]…provide a depth of understanding lacking in other approaches to investigation' (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, p. 32).

However, the subjective nature of perspectives, experiences and judgments made by both young people and researcher in this kind of study, makes it important to reflect on those subjectivities in order to clarify where this interpretation of data has come from. This is critical to ensuring the trustworthiness of findings (Conteh et al., 2005).

This section discusses the nuts and bolts of the methods used, and the limitations of their application in this particular research. It discusses ethical dilemmas that were troublesome and considers the impact of my position as a researcher who could be described as both an insider and outsider in the setting.

10.1.1 Reflections on research methods

There were 17 people involved in Phase I, and of these, seven remained until completion of data collection. This number of participants meant that findings could not be claimed as statistically robust. Yet, in asserting the value of qualitative research, findings are claimed as trustworthy and relevant in adding to knowledge through the application of established theories (Baker et al., 2004; Boyatzis, 1998; Davies, 2005; Mertens, 2005). For example, the number of participants brought benefits in affording me more time with them during interviews and in observations, which helped me to understand what happened in the setting. Thus, while it may be suggested that a lack of evidence from a larger cohort reduces argument to description of the young people's perspectives and experiences, this suggestion is mitigated by qualitative benefits in data collection and depth of analysis. However, as findings were drawn from a specific case setting, further research in this area is needed to test the veracity of conclusions drawn.

Initially, I planned to recruit a sample that reflected a variety of social and cultural interests to maximise potential for variation in how young people experienced equality in the setting. Yet, my initial intentions for participant variation to include dimensions of ability, age, ethnicity, gender, lifestyle, sexuality and cultural style were never met because these characteristics were not immediately identifiable by observation. Nor were they found to be present or naturally occurring, in the setting. Variation was therefore limited to individual characteristics that were present in each of the participants but, as a convenience sample, was not determined in advance of the study.

On reflection, this lack of variation was in keeping with the ethnographic nature of the study. As my confidence has grown, the idea that I might determine participant characteristics in advance of entering the particular site of this research now seems incongruent with the idea of taking an ethnographic stance to examination of the truths within the situation (Clifford, 1988). Thus, I assert this sample as typical of the case setting.

However, the study was limited in not seeking the views of youth workers who were also part of the situation. Thus, while I could draw conclusions on young people's experiences it was not possible to draw conclusions on the extent to which their experiences were constructed as part of an explicit emancipatory or critical approach to youth work. Nor were the young people's perspectives or understandings compared to those of youth workers. This could have been useful in establishing whether these were closely aligned or largely discordant, and so increase understanding of the whole, and interdependent nature, of cultural life in the setting.

I also piloted four data collection methods which helped me decide on those best suited to this cohort. Selecting the two most appropriate methods was straightforward and provided an opportunity to engage young people in decisions about the research design, by taking their views into account when deciding on methods to use in the main study.

Initially, their responses to questions about the meaning of equality, suggested that the young people did not think too deeply about equality or diversity. On reflection this was perhaps indicative of their understandings of the word 'equality' than any lack of understanding about the topic. Using this language to ask questions later, there was evidence that young people's views were quite well refined. Thus, I learned to be consistent in my use of terms when talking to young people and also to trust in a longer term research process.

I also struggled in those early stages to find a theoretical framework because of the complexity of the research topic, which embraced both youth work and equality interests. During the first three years of my research, I examined literature from a range of disciplinary areas, far beyond the youth work discourse. This examination of a wider literature, and theoretical possibilities, contributed to my understanding of various epistemological standpoints, and took more time than I'd expected.

Eventually I found Mertens (2005) framework that underpinned development of the analytical frame for this study. This experience will help me to judge the time needed for future research projects. It will also guide me in taking a more

pragmatic approach to developing a theoretical framework for similarly complex studies, rather than seek an ideal 'off-the-shelf' single framework for any analysis, I would move more quickly to create and explain a bespoke frame.

10.1.2 Reflections on ethical dilemmas

I found the concept of informed consent straightforward for interviews but problematic for observations. The nature of the setting meant that, in addition to participants, other young people were integral to observed settings.

During the pilot, I tried hard to focus on participants, by recoding only what they did or said. However, people do not exist in isolation and it was difficult to focus on each individual. I soon realised that observations, including young people not directly involved, were integral to understanding the unique case study setting and so contributed to the informal context in which participants experienced equality.

This presented me with an ethical dilemma. I was concerned that I had not secured those other young people's explicit consent, and wondered if this might be unethical. My concerns were alleviated through discussion with young people and youth workers who said they had given written generalised consent to being photographed and to being included in evaluative research.

This information on existing permissions and accepted practices seemed consistent with arguments proposed by Gillham (2008) that what people do in a public place cannot be claimed as private. According to Gillham (2008) observation of a public arena is not intrusive, because the activity is being carried out in public and is ethical as passive participation in research. Thus, I considered the consent of this wider grouping to be implied through existing permissions and believed it was ethical because my observations were in a public setting, and so their participation could be regarded as passive.

During the pilot, I was concerned that 'free talk' in response to prompts would impact on the authenticity of findings because the content and focus of data

collected lacked coherence, with no two interviews the same. While this was not unexpected, I wanted to maintain the integrity of the research process and to be wary of emphasising one response over another. Thus, I needed to develop trust in the processes I would use to analyse data and produce findings. This relied on my judgements as a researcher to determine those areas that were important to follow because of their links to the study focus and those that were less important.

I became confident in making these judgements by ensuring that my coding categories were applied systematically and this meant that while conversations were different, by returning always to Boyatzis (1998) Thematic Analysis Framework (TAF) as a clear and systematic way of coding data to generate themes for analysis, I could be sure that analysis was not based on subjective judgements or personal bias.

Yet, using Boyatzis' TAF to analyse data brought another challenge for me as a novice researcher. This process generated seven themes, each of which could have been examined in detail, as discrete chapters in this thesis. However, in order to meet the research aims and to develop a deeper understanding of the core research interests (equality and youth work), rather than undertaking a superficial analysis of all seven themes, I elected to analyse these two areas in greater detail.

However, as soon as I started to think this way, I realised that the labels I had attached to the themes were so broad, that they were not really useful in considering the findings. I did not expect this, which meant that after a two-year period of using one set of draft themes, I revised these as category labels and restructured the thesis in its current from to offer a deeper and more focused analysis of the specific case study setting. At the time, these revisions felt like a setback but I now realise it was a key part of my journey in becoming a researcher, and thus, helped me to get back on track in my journey towards thesis completion.

Finally, the range of question prompts meant that young people's responses were developed in a series of communicative interactions that were open to

multiple interpretations and misinterpretations. Thus, it was important to use different methods, such as interview and observation, to triangulate information and also to check back with participants, to ensure that my interpretation of their perspectives and experiences was as close as possible to their meanings and understandings of the topic.

10.1.3 Reflections on my position as researcher

On paper, the aims of both the pilot and main study were largely similar. Yet, despite refining research questions through the pilot, I did not fully clarify the focus of the study until the end of the second year (2007). While the aims remained broadly similar, my understanding of the youth work research conversation I was joining improved, and this helped me to develop a focus on youth work discourse as distinct from a more widespread discourse in youth studies.

However, the study aimed to add knowledge and understanding of what young people learned about equality. Therefore, elements of youth studies discourse were also included in discussion of findings.

Attending conferences enabled me to discover how these two different discourses contributed to understanding of findings. Yet, the distinction between the two discourses was not always clear in the research literature. While broadly similar, in use of research approaches and methods, the research interests in each discourse appeared different. A larger volume of articles was available for youth studies than for youth work. This confirmed youth work as under theorised and helped explain why I had not previously identified the two discourses as distinct. It also strengthened my resolve to stick with the youth work focus in order to add knowledge to understanding of that discourse.

I also used a research journal to reflect on these apparent differences. According to Moon (2006) a research journal offers a place for 'reflection on the progress of the project…[as]…the location for comments and for 'thinking on paper'…[where] …the 'train' of thinking is retained…in one place' (Moon, 2006, p. 139). I did not write something every day, or even every week, but

found it reassuring to have my journal there for those times when I needed to reflect on my feelings of being lost or frustrated, or when my head was so full of ideas and possibilities that I needed to put them down on paper to make sense of them.

My journal offered a safe space where 'half-baked' ideas could be explored and where I formulated my thinking. For example, I used my journal to mind-map possibilities in the very early stages of developing the research proposal and later, in visualising the theoretical framework. I also used it to grapple with concepts that were new to me and to formulate ideas that were embryonic in data but developed later in discussing findings.

Thus, my journal incorporated a range of purposes as 'the engine of ideas, a record of decisions and a store of fragments of future drafts' (Murray, 2006, p. 189). By engaging in informal, more personal writing, my journal was invaluable in assisting me to find focus in my thinking about the research topic, in determining study direction and in developing argument. Having reflected on the research process I was able to draw conclusions from my analysis.

10.2 Conclusions

This section draws conclusions by building on analysis from earlier chapters that showed how findings responded to each of the research questions in order to meet the study's aims and objectives. The study examined how young people involved in youth work perceive and experience equality within one generic youth work setting, in order to increase understanding of young people's learning about equality in youth work. The following conclusions relate to the young people's reasons for attending youth work, their experiences of equality, their learning about equality and the negotiation principle.

First, there was evidence to conclude that young people attended youth work in order to meet, make friends and have fun by engaging in challenging and interesting activities which sometimes led them to volunteer and help run

programmes and groups. Keeping out of trouble and receiving emotional support also contributed to the young people's reasons for attending. The voluntary nature of attendance and participation, especially among those who became volunteers, also helped to sustain their participation over time and assisted them in their transition to adulthood.

The young peoples' reasons for attending youth work were mutli-dimensional and were developed on individual and social levels. Although their reasons for attending were not articulated as learning about equality, these reasons for attending provided the context for the development of their perceptions and experiences of equality in this case study setting.

Second, when compared to earlier research literature, this study offers new understandings of how young people experience equality in one youth work setting where multiple conceptualisations of equality were perceived by the young people as present in the setting.

Applying the Equality of Condition framework (Baker et al., 2004) I conclude that the young people involved in this study perceived and experienced equality in terms of age, ability, culture and gender, and some reported they were subject to discrimination on grounds of age and gender.

At a micro-level, there was evidence that young people experienced the dimensions of equality proposed by Baker et al. (2004) in some programme areas. For example, the world issues group or international exchange gave the young people opportunities to reconsider their own understandings and perspectives about difference, and engaged them in collective action for common good. Thus, it was possible to also conclude that, to an extent, their experiences contributed to social change both inside and outside of the setting.

Although this was a small scale study, these were large scale changes for the participants and were suggested as important in enabling young people to try out those new roles and identities or engage in exploratory youth work conversations about being or becoming adult.

Young people suggested that their relationships with youth workers were important to helping them to take on new roles or see different perspectives and experience or challenge power relations. Over time, their relationships with workers and other young people changed, and this influenced their learning about equality. This leads me to further conclude that generic youth work can be identified as an emancipatory practice where young people's perceptions and experiences were influenced by their roles and relationships in the youth work setting and their experiences of power there.

Yet, the study also identified a paradox in power relations that created tensions for young people, between freedom and surveillance, liberation and containment. This paradox has been debated in youth work literature (Jeffs and Smith, 1999; de St Croix, 2010) and in this study, appeared to influence young people's involvement in the youth council, where they were both consulted and constrained by adult discourse and intervention. This presents a dilemma for youth workers in their capacities to operate within existing policy frameworks, while maintaining a value base for equality in practice.

Third, the evidence shows that youth work, as developed in this setting, facilitated learning as a social practice that helped young people to experience and negotiate new identities, and was consistent with contemporary literature on liberating and democratic youth work practice (Martin, 2001; de St Croix, 2009; Skott-Mhyre, 2006; Wallace, 2008).

The study also offers examples of boundary crossing which appeared to contribute to their learning about equality. For example, where young people crossed social and cultural boundaries in mixing with people of different abilities, or from different style groupings. In this sense, I am able to suggest that youth work is a boundary crossing pedagogy for learning about equality. Thus, it compliments and contributes to existing theoretical perspectives that have argued equality as a value base in youth work but which have lacked empirical evidence from a generic setting to support this position.

Yet, boundary crossing did not simply happen because a diverse range of people mixed informally in a youth work setting that promoted equality and

human rights. Nor was boundary crossing achieved through the application of a diverse range of theoretical or disciplinary narratives or concepts. Rather, boundary crossing appeared to be facilitated through a series of negotiations in the youth work setting.

Finally, I identified the negotiated nature of youth work as a process developed in five stages in this youth work setting, which I believe has relevance for other settings. For example, the introduction of a negotiation principle means that in circumstances where young people are constrained or have not chosen to attend voluntarily, practice may still be classified as youth work, so long as participation is negotiated within an emancipatory youth work value base. In circumstances that take youth work across boundaries and into what Giroux (2005) has called educational borderlands I propose the negotiation principle as a starting point for emancipatory youth work practice. One implication of this negotiation principle could be to add it as another characteristic in Davies' manifesto. Other implications are discussed in the next section.

10.3 Implications

This study shows that although young people did not explicitly participate in youth work to learn about equality, they offered examples of how they learned about equality there. At a micro-level, this provides new empirical evidence on how learning about equality was achieved through a boundary crossing, critical pedagogy. The negotiated nature of youth work impacted on formation and development of relationships in this setting and so, despite a lack of empirical research in youth work, this study offers insights that bring implications for the development of youth work policy and practice that may impact on the immediate future for practice in the UK and underpin my recommendations for future development.

Policy Implications

The research shows that generic youth work contributed to policies that sought to include young people in decisions about their lives and to facilitate their personal, social and educational development (European Commission, 2001;

Scottish Executive, 2004, 2007). At a micro-level, social change was possible and to an extent, youth work could critically and explicitly be articulated as equality work.

Yet, the equality section of the Scottish Government website (2011c) did not provide references to policies or helping agencies for young people to seek additional information, while it did provide information on age discrimination and helping agencies for older people who felt they needed support. This suggests a loophole in equality policy that implies a need for development of equality policy and legislation in terms of age discrimination directed towards young people. Thus, the study supports a call for a review of equality policy in order to address ageist discrimination and to provide information related to eradicating age based discrimination for young people on equalities web-sites.

A second implication relates to the suggestion that youth work is a boundary crossing or border pedagogy. It would be helpful to consider youth work policy in light of this suggestion, and to consider how wider policies on integrated services for children and young people, such as GIRFEC or CfE, might better reflect the potential for generic youth workers and generic youth work to be deployed in a range of settings, across a variety of disciplinary and practice areas, in order to facilitate learning and build young people's prospects for a good life.

Practice Implications

Emphasis on equality work as part of generic youth work also brings implications for practice development. Rather than emphasising targeted programmes or issues, these findings suggest that equality work should be promoted as part of generic youth work in order to bring the equality value base into focus. This shift in focus could empower generic youth workers and young people to address issues of discrimination. It could help them to develop new practices for learning about equality, human rights and social justice in generic settings instead of maintaining current assumptions that equality work should be developed in discrete groups or settings.

A policy shift in this direction could help bring much needed new funding to generic youth work practice and so reduce practitioner concerns about lack of investment. Another implication of this kind of policy shift would reduce any gaps between underpinning value base and service development expectations that are not always the same. A focus on the equality value base would emphasise the processes of youth work, and seek to value youth work, beyond simple measurements of short term outputs and products.

I assert that shifting practice towards border crossing generic youth work increases capacity to facilitate young people's learning across social, cultural and professional or disciplinary boundaries. In this way, youth workers could be effectively positioned in those interstitial spaces between practices in order to facilitate young people's capability to have a good life. Thus, a further implication form this study is in the more widespread development of youth work in places where the voluntary principle is compromised.

As a series of negotiated relationships with an emancipatory purpose, generic youth work could also challenge the kind of inequalities that young people in this study said they faced in terms of age by establishing a political and campaigning practice that works to raise awareness of age discrimination and campaign for equality.

The negotiated nature of youth work brings another implication related to the work of the Standards Council for Community Learning and Development which oversees the registration and professional training of youth workers. The Standards Council has identified negotiation as an important competence for professional youth and community workers in curriculum development and collaborative or partnership working. Yet, this relates to negotiations amongst professionals. In light of the five stages of negotiation identified in this study, negotiation could be considered as an important competence in scaffolding relationships among young people and youth workers. Thus, I suggest that capacity in negotiation skills, not only with partner agencies but with young people too, is a core competence for anyone involved in youth work practices.

Research Implications

The research was timely, in light of the current UK-wide campaign, In Defence of Youth Work (IDoYW, 2011) and in calls for a Parliamentary Commission on Youth Work in Scotland (YouthLink, 2011). Publications from this thesis have already contributed to debate about contemporary political and social responses to young people.

However, more research is needed in order to establish a critical mass of evidence about youth work, to develop a detailed picture of national and international perspectives on emancipatory practices. I propose five areas for future research. First, this study examined young people's perspectives and experiences and so I suggest a need to garner other perspectives and experiences on learning about equality in generic youth work, for example, from youth workers or policy developers.

Second, the literature suggested that youth work is often misunderstood. To avoid confusion, further examination of my conceptualisation of youth work as border pedagogy would examine the boundaries and interfaces that appear to be important in facilitating learning about equality in a generic youth work setting.

Third, this study shows that while young people experienced equality in this youth work setting, they did not experience it all of the time, and very rarely in other settings. Reflecting a lack of empirical evidence in this area, it would be useful to compare this research with other studies. This was not possible due to the lack of empirical research in this area. Thus, I recommend that research into day-to-day practices in youth work be extended. This could be achieved by strengthening connections between the academic community and youth work practitioners to develop new youth work research in the areas such as equality work and the five stages of negotiation, in settings where the voluntary principle is compromised, such as schools.

Another implication of strengthening these links would be enhanced research capacity amongst youth workers and academics who could partner each other

in research collaborations. Reflecting on my own experiences of being a youth worker, accountable for a range of youth work resources, I was reminded of the prolific and detailed methods of gathering evidence of outcomes and reporting those to funders. Yet, in 23 years as a youth worker and youth policy advisor, no member of the academic community spoke to me about how, with minor adaptations, such detailed accounting procedures could become a robust and ethical method of gathering data.

By collaborating on shared research interests and accountabilities there is potential for mutual benefit in three areas.

First, I suggest this could lead to development of research mindedness among practitioners who are already investing time and effort in data collection as part of their daily accounting routines or in their regular encounters with young people.

Second, for academics whose time for fieldwork is limited, analysing evidence provided by practitioners could bring a benefit in making best use of time available, and would add to the critical mass of research in this area.

Third, by forming closer ties, the potential for joint funding and collaborative projects is increased and possibilities new funding sources may be identified.

The final question that emerges from this study relates to the five stages of negotiation. More research is needed to consider whether these five stages of negotiation might also be useful in other youth work settings.

And Finally…

This study began by suggesting youth work as an under-theorised practice, yet a core value base in social, democratic and emancipatory purpose has been found, not only in what the young people said about their experiences in youth work, but also in contemporary literature.

This study adds to knowledge by providing empirical evidence to show how young people learned about equality. A focus on youth work's emancipatory

purpose offers new accountabilities for youth work, but more research is needed in order to consider what these accountabilities might be and how they might be valued.

In light of this analysis, I suggest that youth workers and young people need to routinely ask questions about what, how and why youth work is developed, as part of a research minded culture. It is no longer enough to practice a kind of anecdotal resistance while seeking professional parity with disciplines that have embraced a practice based research agenda and have used robust research to communicate and inform practice and policy development.

This research has contributed to knowledge and understanding of young people's learning about equality in one youth work setting. This is only one aspect of the work. The wider contribution of youth work remains under-researched, rather than under-theorised. I have argued that youth work development could be enhanced by increased levels of practice based research. In this sense, building research-mindedness may be just as important as securing funding or skills development to the future of educational boundary crossing and the survival of emancipatory generic youth work practice.

In highlighting this series of implications it is my belief that, if enacted upon, these will contribute to changing how generic youth work is viewed in policy and across a range of professional areas.

This study highlights that there are problems in defining the nature and purpose of youth work, even at the level of recording what it does, or how it is developed. Yet, the young people in this study engaged in a range of youth work elements and negotiated their relationships with youth workers and each other which provided evidence of learning about equality. Thus, my analysis suggests that an emancipatory purpose is at the heart of generic youth work practice and emphasises the need to examine the reasons that underpin why youth work is developed.

This is a key aspect in responding to Davies' question of understanding and realising the potential for youth work, which he suggested was an unfinished

practice. To me, the idea of unfinished practice is a positive position for youth work. Just as the nature of practice and its impact on the future lives of young people is also ‘unfinished’ and evolving over time, youth work as ‘unfinished’ practice can also adapt and evolve in order to create and respond to changing, current and future circumstances.

This research has shown that generic youth work is grounded in emancipatory and democratic practice. I am convinced that so long as it continues to uphold those values, within a ‘never-finishing’ or evolving policy and practice environment, youth work will continue to make a lasting and distinctive contribution to the lives of young people and to enhancing their capability to lead a good life.

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12 Appendices

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form — Appendix A

Thank you for your interest in this study. This sheet outlines why I am doing this research, how information will be gathered and what will be done with the information if you decide to participate. It explains about confidentiality and how long the study will last and this will enable you to give informed consent about your involvement.

Annette Coburn, 2006

WHY am I doing this?

I am currently studying for a PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) at the University of Strathclyde and this involves doing a research study. The topic I am interested in finding out about is young people's experience of equality and how this impacts on their lives.

The aim will be achieved by asking young people questions about why they attend youth work, their experiences of equality and learning in youth work.

WHY are you being asked to participate?

You are being asked to participate because you attend youth work and therefore will have an opinion on the topic of my research. You do not need to participate and will not come to any harm whether you decide to take part or not.

HOW will information be gathered?

Through a series of one to one conversations (interviews) and observation of participants while they are in the youth project, information will be collected about young people's experiences and views on equality.

To help ensure that nothing is missed out or forgotten, interviews will be taped and a written note produced. I will write up field notes during and after my observations. These will be useful when it comes to discussing and analysing the findings.

To help gather more or different information, there will also be short periods of data collection by other means (text messaging and diary entries). These will be sent directly to the researcher within the agreed time frame.

All information collected will be kept in a secure place and will only be seen in its original form by the researcher.

WHAT will be done with this information?

The evidence gathered will be collated. In conjunction with published articles and other available information, the collated evidence will examine issues related to the research aims.

The final report (thesis) will be presented to the supervising tutors and external examiner. The results of the study may also be published in a shorter format as an article within an academic journal or other relevant publication. The information may be used at various conferences and in the teaching of Community Education students.

HOW long will it all take?

This is a detailed project that will take a while to complete but each participant will only be involved for short periods, and at times that are convenient to them. *It is suggested that text messaging will be on one specific date each year (for three years) and diary entries will involve a total of five entries per person.* Each interview will last approximately one hour and observation periods will vary depending on what is taking place. Observations will happen five times per person over a three year period.

You should be aware that this is a long term project and be prepared to stay committed for the whole time but sometimes circumstances change and where this happens, of course you would be free to opt out of the study.

WILL my name be published or will people know it was me who said certain things?

Your name will not be attached directly to any particular point being made and no data collected will be identifiable to a named individual. Information will only be used in a generalised and confidential manner. To help protect anonymity no one will be identified by name in the main body of the report and where appropriate I will use ‘made up’ names instead of ‘real’ names.

WHAT if I get involved and then have to pull out?

Whether you get involved or not is entirely up to you and no one else associated with the project (staff, volunteers or other young people) will have a say in this. If you choose to be involved you should be willing to stay with it for the whole three years.

However, things happen, people move away and life changes therefore, don't worry if you have to pull out of the project. There is always the option to leave at any time with no questions asked and no repercussions to you personally. It would be unethical for me as a researcher to try to force you to participate after you have indicated that you are unable to continue, so if you feel you need to leave it will not be a problem. All I would ask is that you let me know by phone or e-mail as soon as possible after you have decided to opt out as this will save me spending time chasing people who are no longer able to be involved.

A word about definition:

This project is about young people's experiences and opinions of equality NOT someone else's view of that. It is important that young people themselves identify and define what equality means to them.

Therefore, no overall definition of equality will be given at the start of the project as participants will, through their ideas, opinions, experiences and actions shape and identify what equality is about for them. This will enable a definition to emerge from the data collected rather than working towards a definition that is set by the researcher.

For more information:

Should you require clarification or want to discuss any part of this briefing note further, please do not hesitate to call me on 0141 950 3602 or e-mail me on annette.coburn@strath.ac.uk to arrange a convenient time for a chat.

Participant Agreement and Consent Form

I have read the information sheet and understand the purpose of this study.	
I agree to participate in this study	
I am willing to express my views and share my experiences of equality through interview, *diary entry, text messaging* or being observed.	
I agree to interviews being digitally recorded and to being observed while participating in youth work.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can opt out of this study at any time, if so I agree to inform the researcher immediately.	

I hereby **give my consent** for my opinions, views and observations to be recorded and used in a generalised way within academic writing and research studies as outlined in the above briefing note.

NAME:____________________________ **AGE:** _____________________

SIGNATURE: ____________________ **DATE** _____________________

OBSERVATION FIELD NOTE **Appendix B**

Date__________________Time ________________ Context/ Setting

No of people present, overall mood/atmosphere

Direct Observations

Who did what? How did people engage in learning? What actually happened?

Immediate Reflections

Initial thoughts about the above and pointers for future observations (things to look out for)

Example of how this was developed and used in this study:

Pilot Observations Field Note 4

Context/ Setting

Thur. Night (August) 7pm – 7.30pm

Routine setting, Thur Drop-in around 30 – 40 people in.

Had decided to try a different type of observation. This was triggered by noticing a poster on a previous visit that was overtly sexist and I thought it would be worth examining the physical environment further. So instead of observing the young people within the youth work setting I observed posters and other images around the facility and made some general notes about the physical setting.

So, I wandered around, looked at the walls and recorded my observations of these and other aspects of the setting. I did not include the office area or downstairs staff room because I felt that these areas were not accessible to the young people and so not directly relevant to this study.

I did not use the pro-forma as usual but instead took notes as I went along and then transferred them to this format later.

Direct Observation

First, I walked down the ramp and tried to get into the arts and crafts room but it was locked. So was room 4.

There were no posters or notices on the walls in either the ramp or outside of the games hall. The games hall is being set up for basketball. I go inside and find the basketball coach and some young people moving equipment from the cupboards out into the main hall area. I glance in the cupboard and see a variety of gymnastics and other sports equipment (as would be expected in a PE store area).

The corridor areas were 'grimey', the walls looked in need of a paint and the edging of the floor had seen a build-up of dirt.

The courtyard doors were locked but a peer through the glass determined that the area was also neglected and appeared not to have been used for some time.

Next upstairs to the coffee bar, which was open and being run by volunteer young people. There was a poster stuck on the grill post, about a forthcoming trip to a skatepark in Livingstone, there were no images on the poster, just information about the date, cost and who to contact if interested.

There were some hygiene related posters on the walls behind the servery. The print is small and can't be read from the front of the counter, the corners are curling. The items on sale were soft drinks and confectionary (no food).

I noticed three seats in a bad state of repair (each in a different section of seating). They appear to have been slashed some time ago, the stuffing was showing in two places and in one case had been 'picked out'.

Again the overall seating and décor was grimey and looked uncared for. The upholstery was dirty, I hit one of the base units and the dust could be seen rising from it, the kick back boards were scuffed.

The poster that triggered my thinking about physical environment is still on the wall near the drinks machines. It is entitled, 'Beauty school Drop-in' and invites 'girls' to come to a 'class' or 'group' (*it's not clear*) every Tuesday and get tips from an expert about their make-up, nails etc. There is also the promise of facials and the images on the poster are of two 'model type' faces, heavily made up, with immaculate hair.

There are two automated drinks/sweet machines – charges appear fairly regular (eg 50p for a can).I went along the corridor to room 2 and 3 and found both locked. Room 3 is now a full time school room and appears not to be used at night at all.

The pool table has a rip in the felt near the white ball spot. There is a poster about a band night next to the pool table it includes the name of three bands and gives information about the date and time (Friday till 10pm). There is a picture of a guitar playing male on the poster.

The computing room was open. There are 6 PC's in the room, all screens visible from the door access point. There was one young person and one worker in the room. The PC being used by the young person was the only one switched on, the others were off. There is a poster about not bringing food or drink into the room.

The Youth Council room is locked. The female toilets are fine. I don't go into the gents.

The 'Beauty School' poster is also displayed on the walls heading towards the toilets, one in the toilet corridor and one on the wall next to the office

Reflection/ Commentary

I was surprised and a bit annoyed at the level of disrepair and general cleanliness. I found myself being critical of the physical environment and on a negative spiral which actually changed my mood as a walked around. I was unprepared for this and to be honest, had not noticed or considered these things (other than one ripped seat and the beauty school poster) on my three previous visits.

Thus, I think it would be interesting to continue to undertake observations of the physical environment as this helps me to focus on observing things that I would not otherwise see. Also, the impact this had on my mood/ feelings may emerge in the experiences of the young people and so be of interest within this study.

It was also evident that less than half of the building was being used at this time, more rooms were locked than open. Not sure what this might mean in relation to this study but worth noting for future reference and worth recording use perhaps at different times and over a longer period. (Note To self: maybe I could ask if for a centre programme that would highlight overall use, thinking about it this might also be worth examining to see how the programme is portrayed in literature to young people). Obviously, this type of literature could be the focus of a separate study but is also relevant in how it adds to description of this particular case and so is worth further exploration.

Need to look at outside environment too… including skate park.

As discussed in Chapter Three, I also used the following Two-Minute Grid to check off-aspects of difference in various locations throughout the facility. I use this during the pilot study but not for the main study. My reasons for this are also explained in Chapter Three.

Nature and Frequency: Two minute Observation Grid

KEY: G = Gender; A = Age; R= Race; S = Sexuality; AB = Ability; C = Class;

R = Religion; O = Other

Loction (2 mins. each) 🡻	G	A	R	S	AB	C	R	Other (specify)
Pool table								
Café Mid-Point								
Café Far-End								
Computing Room								
Other Area (Specify)								

E-Diary: Information

E-Diary is being used to gather information about your experiences and thoughts on the topic of equality at [this setting]. This means you will be asked to write a diary entry, attach it to an e-mail and send it to annette.coburn@strath.ac.uk.

REMEMBER….it is **your** diary so you can write about anything you want so long as it's linked to equality here at [the setting]. Only you and Annette will see your diary (even if your diary is quoted or used in the study, all obvious identification will be removed so no one else will know who said these things).

It is an informal diary entry and so doesn't need to be formal at all…. it is NOTHING LIKE a school essay…..The following guide might be helpful but REMEMBER…it is up to you what you write, if you want to skip any part or add something different that would be absolutely fine.

How much you write is also up to you but it would be helpful if you could do at least half a page (around 200 - 300 words)....more if you want.

E-Diary: Guide

Bring to mind a time or situation when you were at [the setting] and experienced something that made you think about equality. It could be something that happened, something that someone said, or something you saw or did.

Once you have thought of something, please write about what happened, how you felt about it and why you felt like this. Were your feelings positive or negative, good or bad?

You should explain why you decided to write about this particular thing (you could have chosen anything so why this?).

Finally, imagine what you would do if you could change anything to make this type of experience different and write about that too.

You can write about your chosen situation either as a general diary entry OR you may find the following prompts useful….it is up to you.

1. I thought about equality when……
2. This made me feel……
3. I felt like this because…..
4. I wanted to write about this because……
5. If I could change something to make things different, I would…….

Text Messaging Frequency Checklist

Participants selected a three-hour period of their own choosing and sent me a text every time an aspect of equality became apparent to them during that timeframe. They were given a pre-selected code list that included the 'other' category. This information was then compared or combined to triangulate with data captured through other instruments.

The following grid acted as a frequency count:

Date: _______________ Timeframe _________________

TEXT HEADING	Frequency (+ive text)	FREQUENCY (-ive text)
Age		
Gen (gender)		
Race		
Rel (Religion)		
Sex (sexuality)		
Other (text in full)		

Research Questions & Interview Prompts	**Appendix D**

Seventeen participants were interviewed during phase one and this reduced to a final grouping of seven. A set of questions was piloted and these were revised for the main study followed by more specific questioning in the second interviews. Phase one informed the focus of questioning for the second interview and directed my observations towards aspects of equality or elements of youth work that young people identified. The following list of questions incorporate all of those used as prompts in this study.

Phase I	Finding out about participation in the facility, experiences of equality and how they perceived this within the youth work setting.
Phase 2	Updating information on their experiences and perceptions and seeking to explore themes and topics from the findings of the first phase.

Questions were asked in relation to each research question as follows:

RQ 1. Why do young people attend the youth work setting?

Phase 1
How often do you come to [the setting]?
Why do you come to the [setting]?

Phase 2
Since the last time we met… has your involvement/ participation in [setting] stayed the same or changed? In what way - how? Why was this?
Has the place/ programme changed since the last time we met …how? Why?

RQ 2. Do young people perceive and experience equality within the setting?

Phase 1
You know this study is about equality, do you think [this place] has anything to do with that topic? Can you tell me why you say that? What makes you think that?

Are all the young people who come here the same?
In what ways are young people different from each other?
Are there any similarities? Can you tell me about those too?

Are you aware of anything to do with equality [or fairness] that happens here? Can you tell me about these things? How often do they happen?
Why do you think these things happen?
Who is involved in these things…you…and/or…who else?

Phase 2.
Since the last time we met, have any of your ideas about equality changed? How? In what ways have they changed or stayed the same? Why?

Remember we talked about people who were the same or different to you last time….how do you feel about that now? Have any your ideas changed? Why?

RQ 3. Does youth work, as practised in this setting, help young people to learn about equality?

Phase 1
What does equality mean to you? What is equality about? How would you define it? Why do you think this?

Thinking about [the setting] in particular, does anything about coming here or meeting the youth workers make a difference to your thinking about equality? In what way? How and why? What makes you think this? Do you ever discuss [equality stuff] with anyone else up here, why? Why them? Why? Why might it not be talked about?

Phase 2
Since our last meeting, have you noticed anything in or around [the setting] that you think is about this topic? Has anything happened since last time that has made a difference to how you think or act about this? Why do you think that is? Why is that?

From the last time I was here…it was suggested that…xxxx what do you think about that? Why? Anything to add about that?

Does having youth workers around make a difference? How?
Thinking about what you said before about equality and what it means…can you think of an example of something that happens in here that makes you think about equality or that demonstrates equality or inequality in [setting].

Since our last meeting has anything changed or did you notice anything else you'd like to tell me about?

*Applying Boyatzis' TAF (1998), in order to generate themes***.**

The research design chapter shows how the process of generating themes in this thesis was developed over the whole research study, from piloting to final writing stage. Although not developed in chronological order, this appendix brings key elements of that process together to provide an overview of the whole process. First, it identifies the thematic code I developed to analyse data. Second, it shows the sub-theme categories that I grouped together to produce the thematic code. Finally, it shows how context informed my coding decisions.

The Thematic Code

As explained in the research design chapter, I used highlighter pens and a process of open coding to data in the pilot in order to generate a thematic code-listed in alphabetical order:

- When young people talked about race, age, being treated fairly and were observed by me in relation to gender, ability and power dynamics within the setting, I grouped these together and named them as **aspects of difference (AoD)**.

  In this setting, this sub-theme included four aspects that were linked to social groups: race, gender, ability and age. It also included values and judgements, talking about human or social rights and equal opportunities, and their ideas on learning about diversity and difference. This theme also included the young people's view that the topic of equality was not talked about or that young people were unsure about. By Phase II the sub-themes were: equality topics and social groups; power and control; changed relationships and respect for other young people and youth workers; learning about diversity; increased involvement and social/cultural mix.

- When young people made reference to time and place and expressed some sense of immediate or future action, I grouped these together under the heading of **being and becoming (BB)**.

  This theme included young people's consideration of themselves at that time (in the here and now) and who or what they might become (some time in future). The sub-themes included: mixing and learning through cultural youth exchange; meeting and associating with friends; future aspirations about life; having fun and a good time; a changed role or learning within youth work; being involved; increased confidence and self-awareness; life changes were reported as going to University or the death of a close relative and growing up

- When young people talked about outside influences such as school, college and the family, I grouped them together and named them as **structural influences (SI)**.

This theme incorporated social structures or institutions that were part of the young people's lives. This included sub-themes about: schooling, teachers, family and work, college or university. Young people also suggested other influences on their perceptions of equality. These were traditions and connections with the local authority or local political structures.

- When young people stopped to think, when they were observed making thoughtful suggestions of if they said they were unsure what they thought about something, I grouped these together and named them as **thinking and theorising (TT).**

  This theme included responses the young people gave when they were unsure of how they felt or had to think for a while before offering an answer. The thoughtful and reflective parts of their responses were coded as thinking and theorising. This theme included these sub-themes: Discussion/Talking/Understanding; changed ideas and perspectives through learning; thinking about youth work; general comments about the world and their lifestyles; reflections on themselves; thinking about friends and family.

- When young people mentioned feelings, respect, trust and emotional states such as anger or happiness, I grouped these together and named them as **well-being (WB)**.

  This theme included sub-themes about staying safe, increased confidence and more general feelings or emotions, in Phase I. By Phase II these three sub-themes remained plus two others, school exams and family ties. These were coded as well-being, because they were drawn from distinct experiences of how school exams and family ties were linked to emotional states, rather than examples of schooling and family as structural influences on their lives.

- When young people made reference to style, musical tastes, young teams/gangs, territoriality, I grouped these together and named them as **youth culture (YC)**.

  This theme included examples of lifestyle and culture that were part of how young people's perceptions and experiences of equality. The sub-themes within this theme were: value-judgements and stereotyping; fun/good times; positive and negative effects of spending time hanging around 'on the streets'; friendship and solidarity; a mixing of youth cultures and styles; peer influence/support; growing up.

- When young people were observed interacting with youth workers in the youth work setting, or when they talked about their experiences in the setting, I grouped these together and named them as **youth work elements (YWE)**.

This theme included sub-themes on: having fun and a good time; youth work and youth worker relations and change stimulated by informal education all of which were cited as part of their experiences and perceptions of equality. The range of sub-

themes also included: feelings/emotions; involvement and volunteering; things to do; people/cultural/style mix; youth worker relations and power/control.

Theme and sub-theme categories

This code was developed by grouping together data from each sub-theme category to create the thematic code. There were 29 sub-theme categories and of those, 12 appeared in a single theme:

Sub-theme Category:	**Present in Thematic Category:**
Equal Opportunities	AoD
Human Rights	AoD
Ideas on the wider world	TT
Lifestyle factors	TT
Peer Influence/Peer Support	YC
Reflection on self and wider ideas	TT
Social Groups	AoE
Staying Safe	WB
Street life/hanging out on streets	YC
Things to do	YWE
Traditions	SI
Work	SI

The remaining 17 sub-theme categories appeared in at least two themes:

Sub-Theme Category:	**Present in Themes:**
Changed and changing relationships	AoD; YW; BB(3)
Confidence/ self-determination	WB; BB (2)
Cultural/Social Mix	BB; AoD; YC; YWE (4)
Family	SI; WB; TT (3)
Feelings/Emotions	YWE; WB
Friends/ Association	BB; TT; YC (3)
Good times/ Having fun	YWE; BB;WB (3)
Growing up/ Work/ Future Aspirations	SI;WB;BB (3)
Learning/Formal and Informal Education/ change thru' learning	BB; AoD; SI;TT;WB;YW(6)
Nature of relationships with youth workers	AoD; WB;YWE (3)
Never/not thought about this before	AoD;TT (2)
Power/Control/Local Authority	AoD; SI;YWE (3)

Respect and Trust	AoD;YWE (2)
Solidarity	YC;YWE (2)
Value Judgements	AoD;YC (2)
Volunteering and Involvement	BB; AoD; YWE (3)
Youth Work	TT;YW (2)

Coding the data in relation to context

Each individual piece of data was coded in light of the context in which the data was collected. This meant that my judgements were crucial in deciding on how to code each item. When young people mentioned specific items, these were coded and categorised consistently within the same theme across the entire set of available data. However, if a specific item was mentioned in a different context, it was coded as the same sub-theme category but located within a different thematic category.

The following extracts illustrate how I interpreted and coded responses across different themes. When responding to direct questions about attendance (How often do you come here and why?) Ali said:

> I come up probably about erm, two to three days a week and I come up to see my friends and just catch up with people, really. Play some pool.
>
> Ali

I coded this response as sub-theme categories of 'friends/friendship' and 'things to do', within the youth work theme because essentially I took this to mean that, Ali was suggesting catching up with friends and playing pool as reasons for attending youth work. Later, Ali talked about young people mixing in the facility:

> People come together…because they all like basketball, even though they like different music, they can be friends…it kind of brings people together, you know?
>
> Ali

Ali suggested that young people mixed across cultural styles despite having different musical tastes when playing basketball. I interpreted this to mean that basketball was a catalyst for creating friendships that cut across diverse cultural styles. I coded this response as both 'friendship' and 'cultural/style mix' categories within the theme of youth culture but not as 'things to do' because the use of basketball here was in a different context to its use as an illustration of activity. Any activity could have been substituted for basketball here because the context was about friendship and cultural style mixing.

This shows how my interpretation and subsequent coding of data were dependent on the context in which the young people introduced or spoke about the data item. This informed my decisions on whether to code each sub-theme category in one thematic category or another and resulted, for example, in friends/friendships appearing as a sub-theme category in four different thematic categories: Youth Work Elements; Being and Becoming; Thinking and Theorising; Youth Culture.