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Abstract

Helen Gatenby

How do youth work students develop their professional values during qualifying education?

This thesis explores how youth work students develop their professional values during qualifying education. It reveals how students accommodate, work with, and reconcile their personal values within the frame of reference of professional work; how an understanding of informal education principles and practices enables this synthesis; and how students in this study used paired-learning methods, journals and individual and group reflection on their practice to navigate this process.

The research was conducted using a longitudinal case study of several cohorts of students studying on a JNC-accredited youth work degree course, taught in a faith-based college. Interviews and student journals afforded rich data. The reflective nature of the interviews – inviting participants to read and comment on their previous answers in subsequent interviews – gave participants a unique opportunity to reflect on, review and appraise their earlier statements. This gave rise to some surprising and important disclosures around their 'value-talk'; and enabled participants to reflect on their growing sense of self, professional identity and the process of change they understood they had undergone.

This study endorses previous findings that assessment creates significant anxiety in students, particularly those in the early stages of their course, leading them to be less than open about their real values, their struggles, their thinking and their practice. However, it also shows, importantly, that creative teaching and learning strategies that draw on the principles and practices of informal education support students to critically engage in their professional values development *within* the assessed course structure. The thesis concludes that, as values are central to youth work, it is essential that appropriate space for values development, a core professional competency, is fostered *within* the formal course structure, in order to avoid professional values development being relegated to a peripheral role and considered 'optional'.

How do youth work students develop their professional values during qualifying education?

Helen Gatenby
School of Applied Social Science
Durham University

PhD Thesis
2018

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Signed:

Helen Gatenby

Date: 28th September 2018

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study investigates:

how youth work students develop their professional values during qualifying education.

This introductory chapter sets the scene for youth work as a professional practice in which values occupy a central place. In it, I introduce the concept of values development in youth work, outline my research interest and how I came to this research topic (including a short biography to locate myself reflexively within the research) and I set the context of the research in time and place. The chapter concludes with a summary of the forthcoming chapters.

1.2 Introducing Youth Work and Values in Youth Work

Any attempted short description of a practice with the breadth and depth that youth work has is likely to be seriously deficient. Youth work is notoriously difficult to describe. Many texts on youth work begin by acknowledging the challenges posed by such an endeavour (Jones, 2012; Bright, 2015; Wood, Westwood, & Thompson, 2015). Writers often draw on the principles underpinning the practice in order to formulate a description: Bright (2015:2) refers to the National Youth Agency (2000) identified principles of *voluntarism*, *association*, *informality* and *education* to frame a longer explanation of work that derives from these principles. Likewise, Jeffs and Smith (2010:1) draw on five elements that '*have fused to delineate what we now know as youth work'*. These differ slightly to the National Youth Agency principles, but are essentially describing the same practice. Principles are clearly a helpful place to start, revealing what is 'behind the curtain' of youth work, the rationale for action, motivating and moving the actors. However, it is sometimes difficult to grasp what the practice of youth work might look like from such descriptions. Such approaches often assume a starting familiarity with the practice.

The following description of youth work starts from a practice perspective that reveals underlying principles. For me, ***youth work is about working together with young people to create relationships, conversations, activities and environments which foster fun, learning, action and change, which benefits those involved and the wider community***. Although a fairly straightforward description arising from practice, it highlights a number of areas of youth work practice that are consonant with the aforementioned principle-based descriptions and which are important to me.

Firstly, youth work is about working ***together with*** young people. This describes an approach to relationships and power, being alongside and working 'with', not 'on' or 'for' young people (Freire, 1972:66). *Together* speaks of collectivity and association (Jeffs & Smith, 2005) sharing enterprises, choosing to be together because we enjoy each other's company (de St Croix, 2016), because we are stronger together (Sapin, 2013) and because we are relational beings. It also speaks about the power inherent in the working relationship – power that is shared and negotiated, controlled neither by the worker nor young person, although tipped in the young person's favour (Davies, 2015).

Secondly, we work together to ***create***. For me, this is a profound reflection of our humanity. We are creative beings and youth work reflects this by being a creative, life-giving, dynamic activity that embraces young people's creativity and enables them to be active creators in their own lives and the world, rather than passive receivers (Smith, 1982).

Thirdly, together we create ***relationships, conversations, activities and environments***. These are the 'settings' for our work (Jeffs & Smith (eds), 1990). *Relationships*, *conversations* and *activities* are the easily recognisable everyday mediums through which young people and youth workers engage with each other in a variety of locations. The addition of *environments* to the list is perhaps a little more unusual, but it recognises that space and place is important in youth work (Kraftl, Horton & Tucker (eds), 2012) and that creatively shaping the spaces and places in which we meet is central to the youth work process, even if the conducive environment we are trying to create together is under a lamp-post on a cold street corner (Smith, 1994).

Fourthly, the outcomes of our working together are ***fun, learning, action and change***. It is easy to forget that youth work should be *fun*: maybe not all the time, but at least enough of the time for young people to want to come in their own time to expend effort being creative

(Sapin, 2013). And through fun, engaging activities, relationships and conversation, workers support young people to *learn* about themselves and learn about life and the world they live in (Jeffs & Smith, 2005; Batsleer, 2008). This learning frequently prompts *action*. The action could be organising a trip out; or perhaps something more complex, such as setting up a project or a campaign. Perhaps the action may be small and personal, but no less significant, for example having the courage to speak to a parent about a serious issue. These actions will bring *change*, in young people's lives and in the world, change that workers help young people to reflect on, evaluate and learn from (Freire, 1972; Kolb, 1984).

Fifthly, the change ***benefits those involved and the wider community***. It seems self-evident to say that youth work should be of benefit to young people, yet current policy can result in workers finding themselves in a position of taking action with young people that is not of benefit to the young people themselves (de St Croix, 2009; 2010b; Wrigley, 2017). The focus of youth work is firstly to be of benefit to young people. However, *those involved* also suggests others might also benefit – the workers, the young person's family, community members involved in a campaign. This recognises the mutuality of the youth work relationship (Freire, 1972; Batsleer, 2008) and the situatedness of young people within networks and communities (Davies, 2015); and reminds us to work for the collective good (Smith, 1994).

This description of youth work draws on the principles that distinguish youth work from other similar welfare practices that work with young people. As a practice that is focused on process and not content, youth work has the potential to take place in many settings. However, not every setting may be conducive to the practice of youth work. Some contexts may actively work against the underlying practice principles (Jeffs & Smith, 2010).

Youth work is frequently described as educational (Rosseter, 1987; Jeffs & Smith, 2010) but this would not, on its own, distinguish it from schooling, although if the circumstances were favourable, youth work could take place in a school. Similarly, youth work can be understood as seeking young people's welfare and working for social justice (Jeffs & Smith, 1988; Wood, Westwood, & Thompson, 2015) but this description would not mark it out from social work. There has been a concern over the last decade that the principles that define and distinguish the practice of youth work are being eroded by the co-option of youth work methods into contexts which do not enable the principles to be realised. Increasingly, a distinction is drawn between: 'youth work', a practice with a set of distinctive features; and 'work with young

people' in settings that are seen to limit or inhibit these distinctive features (Banks, 2010; Batsleer & Davies, 2010; Jeffs & Smith, 2010; Bright, 2015; Davies, 2015). The various lists of distinctive features may differ in small (and not significant) ways, (National Youth Agency, 2000; Jeffs & Smith, 2010:1-4; Bright, 2015; Wood, Westwood, & Thompson, 2015), yet they all find their roots in the work of Bernard Davies (1981; 1996; 2005, 2015; 2010).

Banks (2010:10), drawing on Davies' work (2005, 2015) and that of Jeffs and Smith (2005), summarises and describes these features as follows:

> *Youth work has the following characteristics and values:*
>
> - *A voluntary relationship* with young people, who are free to choose whether or not to be involved;
> - *An informal educational process* that starts where young people are starting, and seeks to go beyond where young people start by encouraging them to be outward-looking, critical and creative in their responses to their experiences and the world around them;
> - *The value of association*, which involves young people working together in groups, fostering supportive relationships and sharing a common life;
> - *The value of young people participating democratically* and as fully as possible in making decisions about issues that affect them in youth work contexts and in life generally.

Critically, youth workers seek to '*tip the balances of power and control in young people's favour*' (Davies, 2010:3) and create environments where the power issues young people encounter in daily life (both seen and unseen) can be recognised, examined and transformed (Batsleer, 2008).

In both academic and occupational literature, youth work is frequently described as 'value-based' (Davies, 2005:4; Sapin, 2013:3) or as having values 'at its core' (LSIS, 2012; Sapin, 2013). In England and Wales, the National Occupational Standards (NOS) detail the required standards for professional, JNC qualified youth workers. The NOS state (LSIS, 2012:2):

> At the core of all youth work practice are the Values for Youth Work, developed with the sector in 2007. The Values describe an approach to youth work and it is expected that all those working with young people will work within the values.

The English National Occupation Standards (*ibid*:5) delineate the occupational values, which are reproduced below:

Participation and active involvement:

- Young people choose to be involved, not least because they want to relax, meet friends, make new relationships, to have fun, and to find support;
- The work starts from where young people are in relation to their own values, views and principles, as well as their own personal and social space;
- It seeks to go beyond where young people start, to widen their horizons, promote participation and invite social commitment, in particular by encouraging them to be critical and creative in their responses to their experience and the world around them;

Equity, diversity and inclusion:

- It treats young people with respect, valuing each individual and their differences, and promoting the acceptance and understanding of others, whilst challenging oppressive behaviour and ideas;
- It respects and values individual differences by supporting and strengthening young people's belief in themselves, and their capacity to grow and to change through a supportive group environment;
- It is underpinned by the principles of equity, diversity and interdependence;

Partnership with young people and others:

- It recognises, respects and is actively responsive to the wider networks of peers, communities, families and cultures which are important to young people, and through these networks seeks to help young people to achieve stronger relationships and collective identities, through the promotion of inclusivity;
- It works in partnership with young people and other agencies which contribute to young people's social, educational and personal development;
- It recognises the young person as a partner in a learning process, complementing formal education, promoting their access to learning opportunities which enable them to fulfil their potential;

Personal, social and political development:

- It is concerned with how young people feel, and not just with what they know and can do;
- It is concerned with facilitating and empowering the voice of young people, encouraging and enabling them to influence the environment in which they live;
- It safeguards the welfare of young people, and provides them with a safe environment in which to explore their values, beliefs, ideas and issues.

Comparing the NOS 'Values for Youth Work' with Davies' (2005, 2015) *Manifesto for Youth Work* makes clear the debt the NOS Values owe to his work. As such, the NOS Values are more akin to a set of principles for practice – a way of describing how values are

implemented in practice – rather than a typical list of occupational values, such as those outlined by Jeffs and Smith (2005:95-96) as the core values of informal education: *respect for persons; the promotion of well-being; truth; democracy; fairness and equality*. The connection between values, principles and practice standards is a nuanced one and is explored in more detail in the following chapter. It is worth noting here that the values Jeffs and Smith claim for informal education could apply to many social welfare practices, a point that Davies (2005:4) makes. What he seemed concerned to do – and what seems to be the concern of the NOS Values – was to describe the distinctive way these general welfare values are realised in the practice of youth work (1981; 1996; 2005, 2015; 2010).

The NOS (*LSIS:2012:2*) approach to realising values is linear and simplistic: youth workers are expected to '*work within'* the values, as if the values form a clearly demarcated, bounded area that is easy is inhabit. The NOS imperative fails to recognise the complexity of navigating competing value positions and the ethical dilemmas inherent in practice. The relationship between our values and our actions is a complex one (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Banks 2004; 2012; Banks & Gallagher, 2009). The next section offers an introduction to developing professional values, which is explored in more detail in Chapter Two.

1.3 Developing Professional Values in Youth Work

As noted above, developing professional values is a more complicated process than simply learning '*very generalised lists of statements of principles or moral qualities, externally created and de-contextualised*' (Banks & Gallagher, 2009:210) and then seeking to apply them to practice (Graham, 2003; Banks, 2015). It requires critical collective situated dialogue between practitioners' values and the values of the profession.

Values development involves both cognitive and affective processes (Weis and Schank, 2002) and an understanding of the self, as the practitioner who is working in the situation, and what that 'self' brings to each situation, shaping our understandings, perceptions, habits and actions (hooks, 1994; Palmer, 1998; Batsleer, 2008:39-44; Moss, 2007). '*Unless we know who we are*,' asserts Moss (2007:9), '*we are not going to be able to help anyone else at all'*. Batsleer (2008:39) notes the paradox inherent in this:

> Youth and community workers need to be as aware as they can be of their own perspectives and motivations if their work with young people is to be freed to support the young person's own decision-making and flourishing. Paradoxically, the recognition of personal agendas on the part of practitioners is the best method of avoiding imposing them on young people.

Such self-exploration for professional practice is the bedrock of values development: 'knowing ourselves', in order to understand who is 'my (professional) self' who works with 'your (client) other' in practice. This process can be thought of as 'values-work', echoing Banks's (2016:36) idea of 'ethics work', a term she uses in social work literature to refer to the effort practitioners '*put into seeing ethically salient aspect of situations, developing themselves as good practitioners, working out the right course of action and justifying who they are what they have done*'. This work is challenging. So it is not surprising that students experience values exploration and critique as a risky endeavour (Cooper 2007/8:62). The comments from two of the research participants, Cate and Anja[1], are typical of many students' concerns about sharing and exploring value positions, a task which they felt left them in the vulnerable position of revealing part of what makes them 'who they are':

> *..... [I] did not want to be judged or misunderstood. It was as if I felt slightly uncomfortable trying to communicate who I was in case the other person judged me or misunderstood who I really was. [...] I realised that it can sometimes be difficult to know who we really are and that sometimes fear of judgement or fear of what others think about us can be a massive factor.* ***Cate, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 1***

> *... if I'm expressing something of myself or who I am I feel extremely vulnerable [...] I can remember occasions like it was yesterday where I've genuinely asked a question because of the person that I am (sometimes a bit naïve and oblivious to things) or my lack of knowledge, and a particular comment has then been passed on as something to be laughed at. These people meant no harm, but that did not seem to make a difference as the hurt I felt came from the fact that someone who claimed to care for me was prepared to laugh AT me with another person when I made myself vulnerable in that small comment.* ***Anja, Group A, Advocacy Learning Journal 1***

The above comments reveal, particularly in Anja's case, the long-term detrimental and inhibiting psychological effect that negative responses can have in enabling students to maintain an open and honest approach to engaging with values development. This is not only true for those students who have experienced this form of 'judging', but can also be true for those who witness it, as one of Cooper's (2007/8:68) research participants commented:

[1] Participants were assigned pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

> … they did express their values at the very beginning and were judged on them … it can be quite intimidating … people are judged on what they say … to a certain extent it makes it more difficult to express what you think.

This creates a conundrum for the educator: how to create an environment where students can explore their understanding of themselves, express and critique what they honestly think and make sound judgements about how these positions impact their professional practice, including thoughtful discussion with others about value positions; without students themselves feeling 'judged' to the point of closing down, being silenced in future discussions or getting 'stuck' internally at the same point in thinking (Liss, in Potts, 1988:95). In increasingly competitive, marketised and outcome-focused academic environments, it can be difficult to foster spaces in groups where students, reflecting on themselves, feel confident to move beyond the standard 'general' descriptors of self to engage in more searching, honest and deeper self-reflection. Discussion of value positions can sometimes be characterised by impassioned rhetoric, abrupt challenge, fearful silence or disinterested disengagement. These experiences and the associated emotions are difficult to manage in the classroom. Yet it is important not to deny, ignore or suppress the emotions that students attach to their experiences, in particular expressions of anger at injustice or oppression, which, Lorde (2007) reminds us, are appropriate responses. Thompson (1983:54), drawing on her experiences of engaging working-class women in education, and echoing Lorde's (*ibid*:127) thinking on anger, writes:

> Growth through anger, focused with precision, can be a powerful source of energy, serving progress and change. Anger expressed and translated in actions in the service of women's vision and women's futures can be a liberating and strengthening act of clarification.

Emotions clearly have a place in values development work: the challenge is to harness them for the purpose of learning, action and transformation. This is not straightforward in a higher education setting and relies on the students' willingness to engage in this work and their understanding of how to approach it effectively. Fostering these reflexive skills in students is a key element of their professional values development.

1.4 Why Research Professional Values Development in Youth Work?

As outlined above, values play a significant role in shaping and realising a critically reflective and emancipatory youth work practice. It is clear that enabling student practitioners to 'develop' their personal and professional values is a central plank of youth worker education. It is less clear how this achieved. The QAA subject benchmarks (2017:10) suggest that the '*teaching and learning strategies employed should be congruent with the practices of youth work*'. Implementing this suggestion is challenging, as youth work is a voluntary and informal (by which is meant predominately conversational) practice and a youth work degree requires a high level of formality and regulation. There is almost no research into the appropriate teaching and learning strategies to employ to support youth workers in their values development. Literature in allied social welfare professions can make up this deficit to some extent. However, the contexts and practices of other welfare professions are not identical to youth work, in particular in relation to youth work's principle of voluntary participation, so contextualisation is required. Secondly, most literature is focused on teaching and learning strategies from the perspective of the teacher, rather than on student's experience. In one sense, they are two sides of the same coin: students' experience will inform knowledge about the most effective teaching and learning strategies to employ; and teachers may trial various strategies to discern which are more useful in supporting student values development. It is perhaps easier for academics and teachers to write about methods and processes from their perspective, than it is to research methods from the perspective of students' experience. As a youth worker, I value the practice principle that states we start where young people are with their experiences, understandings and meanings (Davies, 2005 & 2015; LSIS, 2012). Consequently, I valued the opportunity to research, explore, analyse and understand how students were experiencing the process of developing their professional values, in order to contribute to a gap in the literature.

There is another important reason for this study, relating to the ideological, political and economic climate in which youth work has existed over the past 20 years (from New Labour onwards). There is no doubt these years have had a devastating impact on youth work as a practice and a profession, culminating in the deconstruction of the youth service (Davies, 2019). It is vital to recognise the potential impact this ideological environment has also had on youth work students, as former participants, young leaders and now aspiring professional practitioners, socialising them into a particular experience of, and way of thinking about, austerity-shaped and target-driven youth work. I explore this further in the next section.

1.5 Setting the Research Context: Locating the research in time and place

1.5.1 The place: a 'confessional theological college' and Youth Ministry Course

The study was located in a 'confessional' theological college: open about the Christian faith of the college, 'committed to the mission of God' and with a desire to see people explore their calling, flourish both academically and spiritually and be well prepared for their future ministry. Located in a northern city in the UK, the college is affiliated to a local university, through which its degree courses are validated. Research participants were all youth work students on the BA (Hons) Theology: Youth Work and Ministry (with JNC qualification) degree course. Successful students were awarded with both a JNC professional youth work qualification and a BA (Hons) degree.

The college is part of a world-wide Christian denomination which grew out of the 'holiness' tradition in North America. As a result, its expressions, particularly in the USA tend to be traditional, evangelical and often conservative. In 2001, the international Church identified its three core values as 'Christian, Holiness, Missional', reflecting their active work across the globe. Informed by the college's strong ethic of justice and care, and their rigorous academic and theological approach, the college itself and the college faculty and staff were typically more progressive, open and inclusive in their approach towards moral and contemporary social issues than other expressions of the church would suggest they might be. Students attending the college often came from the same church denomination as the college, from the UK or overseas; equally, the college welcomed students from many other Christian denominations, who were predominantly, but not exclusively, evangelical. There was a strong presence of international students at the college, from African and Latin American countries, reflecting the global reach and missional perspective of the denomination; and also significant numbers of mature students, training for ministry after a number of years working in other professions. Students on the Youth Ministry track tended to be younger, typically starting their first degree at age 18yrs, mostly from the UK and often from evangelical church backgrounds.

The Youth Work and Ministry course was organised over three years of academic, theological and practice-based study, with the JNC qualification assessed by portfolio at the end of Year 2, but not awarded until the completion of the degree at the end of Year 3. The

course sought to prepare students for youth work in both secular and faith-based settings, and included:

- theology modules, such as Church History, the Story of God, and Jesus and the Gospels
- youth work modules, such as Youth and Pastoral Care, Informal Education, Groupwork, Youth Work in the Community
- professional practice modules, looking at issues such as Safeguarding, and Health and Safety.

As well as the various academic, theoretical, practical and professional modules in theology and youth work across the three years, the course included two types of learning placement as follows:

- a 50-week x 12 hours per week 'main' placement (undertaken in five termly blocks, from October of students' first year through to December of their third year); and
- a 10-week x 30 hours per week 'alternative' placement (undertaken between students' first and second year studies).

This provided practice experience and evidence for the JNC professional competence qualification. The course outline is detailed in Table 1: Youth Work and Ministry Course Outline, on page 20.

The three empirical research waves took place between 2008 and 2012 with three student cohorts. During this time, I was employed as a 'Visiting Lecturer' by the college and taught each cohort two of the youth work modules: Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination; and Informal Education. This gave me opportunity to collect data from the three student cohorts – Cohort A 2008-9; Cohort B, 2010-11; Cohort C, 2012.

The Christian faith-basis and confessional nature of the college are important to take into account in exploring student's value development and considering the applicability of any findings to other work. I am an experienced and JNC-qualified/educated youth worker/ informal educator and I am also a Christian; however, I have not undergone any formal theological education. As a result, my approach to the module and curriculum design was shaped principally by my knowledge and experience as an informal educator. I did not take a specific Christian faith-based or moral approach to the teaching content, although my Christian worldview, my passion for inclusion and social justice, and my lived experience as a

Table 1: Outline of the BA (Hons) Theology: Youth Work and Ministry Course

Module Path: **Normative (ft) Study Pattern for the BA (Hons) Theology: Youth Work and Ministry**

Level One

First Semester	Second Semester
Church History	Introduction to Theology
Story of God	Biblical Backgrounds
Introduction to Bib Studies	Contexts of Mission
Human Identity and Transformation	**Advocacy & Anti-Discrimination**
Communications 1 or 2	Youth & Pastoral Care 1
Professional Practice 1	
Placement Observation (Semester One)	Ongoing Main Placement (Semester Two)

Main Placements are initiated in Semester 1 with observation, followed by full placement from semester two

Eight-week Alternative Placement takes place after the completion of second semester year one

Level Two

First Semester	Second Semester
Old Testament elective	Old Testament elective
Jesus and the Gospels	Paul and his Epistles
Person & Work of Christ	Christology
Professional Practice 2	
Informal Education	Youth Work
Youth & Pastoral Care 2	Management
Religions in Contemporary Britain	Group Work
Ongoing Main Placement	

Main Placements operate year two following a summer alternative placement

(Eight-week Alternative Placement takes place if not already completed)

Level Three

First Semester	Second Semester
New Testament elective	Christian Holiness
Early Church	Theology/Church History Elective
Socialisation	Theology of Mission
BA-Research Methods	Youth Work in the Community
Professional Practice 3	
Ethics	Social Justice

There is no placement requirement in Year 3, but students should remain involved in youth work and ministry.

white, British, straight, cis-gendered woman and youth worker working in an ethnically diverse, socially and economically deprived inner-urban neighbourhood, inevitably influenced the way I selected, understood and presented some of the material. Consequently, I sought to create space for diverse voices to be heard in the classroom; for example, through encouraging BAME students' voices, and inviting guest speakers in to work with the class, particularly in the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination module, in order to enable students to hear from perspectives that were not represented in the classroom by either teacher or student. These typically involved inviting in people from Black or Asian ethnic backgrounds, people who held a faith position other than Christian, eg. Muslims and Jews, and people who identified as LGBTQ+. My experience and background knowledge of the Christian faith and its practice was helpful in the context of the college, enabling me to make a 'bridge' to establish appropriate connections with students and to understand their contexts and faith-based views (Collander Brown, 2010). However, I believe the module could equally well be taught in a non-faith-based setting, with minor changes to the learning outcomes and introductory information. Chapter 5 explores the curriculum design of the two modules I taught in more detail.

1.5.2 The time: from global financial crisis through Brexit

The data collection phase of the research took place at the beginning of my research journey, between late 2008 and 2012, with three cohorts of students, through three waves of teaching and data collection. The whole research journey, concluding in 2018, was undertaken during a time of significant social and economic change in the UK and across the world: beginning with the global financial crisis of 2007 (Kingsley, 2012), which almost brought the world's banking system to collapse (Davies, 2019:1), the ensuing UK austerity policies, which, according to a 2018 UN envoy report, left around 14 million people, a fifth of the UK population, living in poverty, and 1.5 million destitute, unable to afford basic essentials (Alston, 2018); and concluding during the UK's imminent departure from the EU, after the 2016 referendum on EU membership, arguably driven by a deep dissatisfaction with the political and 'elite' classes, increasing inequality and a rising English nationalist agenda (O'Toole, 2016) in rejection of austerity and Labour's open door immigration policies (Consterdine, 2017). During this time, the UK government sanctioned continued military intervention in Iraq and then Syria, in the 'war against terror' (Sparrow & Perraudin, 2015) and more specifically against Daesh/Islamic State (HM Government, undated); and it rolled out its 'CONTEST' counter-terrorism strategy in 2011, (HM Government, 2011), of which 'Prevent' became its most well-known stream. Allied to this, Islamophobic hate crime rose

consistently (Tell Mama, 2018); and public and political discourse became increasingly toxic, particularly around 'othering' and immigration of all kinds (OHCHR, 2017; Africa Times, 2018).

This period was also a time of increasing insecurity for youth work and youth workers. Davies' (2019) excellent study '*Austerity, Youth Policy and the Deconstruction of the Youth Service in England*' charts in great detail the ideological, political and economic contexts of this time, and the devastating effects these have had on youth policies, on the deconstruction of the Youth Service in England and notably on public discourse about young people. Pertinent to this study are two related aspects arising from the established and ubiquitous neo-liberal ideology operating throughout this period: the prizing of unregulated free-markets, in a drive to exploit all opportunities for 'wealth-creation' and the justification of this policy on the basis that this wealth would benefit the poorest through the 'trickle-down effect'; and the focus on the individual and individual responsibility, which not only overlooked the impact of 'personal' inequalities arising from class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion (as well as structural inequality) on people's life chances, but then blamed individuals or their families for their inability to overcome these inequalities (Davies, 2019:2-3). The result for the most marginalised young people was a significant reduction in spending on young people, resulting in closure of many youth services and services offering support to young people; a precarious job-market, offering short-term, zero-hours contract jobs in the 'gig-economy'; and an expectation that young people would be 'resilient' in the face of these difficulties. The promotion of the NEET agenda (Not in Education, Employment and Training) set the tone for a popular understanding of young people 'in deficit', magnified by the sustained negative stereotyping of young people in the media (Burke, 2008) promoting a generalised 'fear' of young people (Waiton, 2008). This intensified the moral panic around young people, particularly working-class young people (Margo & Dixon, 2006; Waiton, 2008), Black young men and Muslim young people (Khan, 2013), resulting in increased policing of these groups through stop and search operations and targeted intervention programmes.

Somewhat ironically, during 2010, whilst it became a requirement for JNC-qualifying youth workers to qualify at degree level (an attempt to establish youth work as a profession in its own right), many youth services were disestablishing their work, re-deploying their youth work staff, selling off their youth centres and equipment and contracting out work with young people to the third sector (Davies, 2019). At the same time, the outcomes youth

workers were able to achieve through the distinctive processes they drew on – voluntary participation, attention to relationship and process, starting where young people are and working at their pace – were being co-opted into other welfare arenas, such as schools (working with children with behavioural difficulties), Youth Offending Teams and hospitals (Payne, 2009); and, as a result, these distinctive processes were being diluted and in some cases eroded (Jeffs & Smith, 2010). The skills a youth worker brought to multi-agency statutory teams were prized, yet the contexts in which they were being asked to work frequently mitigated against the work they were engaged to do: young people had no choice to be involved and workers were expected to deliver targets and achieve particular outcomes for young people within specified time frames (Jeffs & Smith, 2008; Davies 2019).

Education policy became increasingly more marketised, target-driven and outcome focused in order to ensure young people became the future workers needed to sustain the economy, narrowing the horizons and life expectations of young people and reducing education to a function of securing employment. As a result of these changes in education policy, in the past four years (2014 – 2018) a number of JNC qualifying youth work degree courses have been discontinued – some replaced with courses such as 'Early Years and Childhood Studies'; others not replaced at all. The loss of the teaching of the *practice* of youth work and JNC competence is concerning; and perhaps indicative of the lack of understanding of how the processes of youth work operate to achieve learning, action and change for young people. Many of the policies that shape education and welfare practice are driven by neo-liberal market policies and no longer benefit the people they were designed to help.

In this rapidly changing policy context, it is vital that youth workers are able to recognise the agendas that shape the work they are being asked to perform, if they want to work for young people's benefit. This is a further reason to study how youth work students develop their professional values during qualifying training. Many of these political, social and economic agendas are hidden, or are so ubiquitous as to be invisible or viewed as unquestionable 'common sense' (Gramsci, 1971), particularly to younger students stepping into youth work training, who, as 'Blair's babies', the second and third generations of 'Thatcher's children', have been socialised into the prevailing neo-liberal narratives about education, work, money, self-regulation, 'deviant' young people and the 'undeserving poor' (Grasso et al, 2019). In addition, in some faith-based settings, there is a view that the reduction of state support for the most vulnerable provides an opportunity for 'mission', philanthropy and generosity; for the church to step in and through loving service, meet the

needs of the most vulnerable (as in Victorian times) and, in some cases to proselytise whilst doing so, without any critical analysis of the structural systems that create such vulnerability, the questionable (ab)use of power imbalances inherent in these exchanges, and the disempowering and dehumanising effect of philanthropy, in particular for the receivers, but Freire (1972) would argue, also for the donors.

Critical reflection is vital in enabling youth workers to recognise, manage and navigate the competing interests they face in their work. This thesis makes a modest contribution to the literature on values development from the perspective of student youth workers; and, as a result, it offers insights into how we [educators] might foster learning environments within the formal course and assessment structures that are conducive to students' critical values development.

1.6 My journey into research

The challenges of 'teaching' values to youth work students were very much in my mind, when, in 2006, I was asked to teach the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination module on a JNC qualifying degree course. I jumped at the chance to teach this module. I enjoy learning and helping others learn – this is no doubt why I love being a youth worker – and I was certain I would learn much from this experience. I felt and still feel strongly about issues of justice and oppression and I was keen that students did not experience the subject of anti-oppressive practice as an exercise in ticking a set of perceived 'politically correct' boxes or an obligation to comply with the law. My own youth work training, with the YMCA George Williams College, had been a value-rich experience for me, enabling me to reflect deeply on and critique my values and motivations and how I worked these out in my daily practice. I owe a great debt to them. I hoped I might be able to create a similar space for values-rich learning for students. How to do this was another matter. The timing of the request left little time to research teaching and learning methods; instinctively, I fell back on my own training as a youth worker and a youth work supervisor. This had introduced me to the educational philosophies of thinkers such as Dewey (1933), Rogers, (1969), Freire (1972), Illich (1973) and Schön (1987) and the curriculum design approaches of Stenhouse (1975), Carr and Kemmis (1986) and Grundy (1987), theories and approaches that underpin the distinctive practice of youth work. This gave me a strong basis on which to build. In addition, I remembered a particular chapter describing a very unusual approach to teaching and learning (Potts, 1988),

which I thought would work well in the context of supporting students to reflect on themselves, their perspectives and motivations and the values and practices of youth work. This shaped my course design, and is explored in greater detail in Chapter 5.

The Advocacy module methods I employed aimed to support students to develop knowledge, skills and dispositions that would support a practice of critical reflection and a commitment to anti-oppressive practice; through a combination of paired learning work in class, theoretical input and reflective journal writing. I believed journals would provide a unique 'space' in the module (and the wider course) for students to work through their learning, particularly in relation to the value-issues that were arising through the Advocacy module.

Students found my methods more than unusual! and frequently told me so in journals, (and occasionally to my face), calling my methods post-modern, navel gazing, laissez faire and questioning why I was not 'teaching' them using more traditional methods. This caused me to reflect critically and regularly on the class, my methods and students' experiences. There were enough positives in early journals to offer me encouragement; so, as a strong believer in the youth work process, drawing on the principles and practices of informal education, I persisted. Journals demonstrated that some students were learning reflective skills and were examining themselves, their values and their practice. Slowly students who had been sceptical began to understand the rationale behind the approach, as they studied Gramsci (1971), Freire (1972) and others. Students had 'light-bulb' moments, about the theory, about the module methods, about themselves and about themselves in practice. It was both exciting and hard work.

Whilst I was in the middle of teaching the Advocacy module for the second time, a colleague passed me a copy of Youth and Policy and suggested I read Susan Cooper's (2007/8) article outlining her research on '*'Teaching' Values in Pre-Qualifying Youth and Community Work Education*'. So much of what she wrote described both my concerns and some of my and students' experiences: students wary of engaging in values discussion through fear of judgement; modular course structures that did not lend themselves well to on-going and cyclical values development; students feeling obliged to 'say the right thing' in order to pass. Yet, it seemed, from the journals students had submitted for my class, that they were engaging in values exploration and critique, both in class and beyond class. I wondered

whether their experiences could shed light on how youth work students develop values during qualifying education. That was the start of my journey towards this investigation.

1.6.1 A short reflexive biography

Having encouraged students to critically reflect on and share something of themselves in their journals, it is appropriate that I do the same here to interrogate the lens through which I have approached this research. I grew up wanting to be a violinist and was fortunate to be able to spend a significant amount of my leisure time as a young person practicing and playing violin in various different groups and orchestras, travelling on exchanges and finally studying music at degree level at university. It was early on at university, at the age of 18yrs, that I had a deep, spiritual, numinous experience, which led me to Christian faith. Two bible verses spoke powerfully to me in a way I am still not sure I understand: Proverbs 31:8-9 '*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy*'; and Mark 1:41 '*Filled with compassion, he reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"'.* In a naïve way, I understood these verses as a vocation to work for justice, not at a distance, but in the midst of and alongside those I was seeking to help. As a young, white, British, straight cis-woman, growing up in a reasonably comfortable lower middle class family, I did not have an awareness of or a framework to understand issues of injustice before coming to faith and reading the bible. However, after that encounter, I became more alive to learning about injustice and oppression: I started reading, volunteering and listening carefully to the experiences of others.

At the end of my second year, I participated in a volunteer programme, which placed me with a church in an urban-poor, ethnically diverse inner-city area, to help run children's activities over the summer. This experience changed my life direction. My anxiety of being rejected due to my education, class, background and skin colour was swept away by the acceptance and welcome I was shown by people from the community. I began to 'see' others' lived experience and 'hear' their stories of struggle and injustice and a new world was opened up to me. After the summer I returned to university to complete my degree, but within the year I had moved onto the estate and started 'volunteering for pocket money' with the church in order to work with local young people on the estate. Twenty-eight years later, I still live in the same community, working with young people and managing a small, faith-based voluntary sector youth project, which, over the years has grown its own youth workers from within the community. I have very much been shaped by my experiences of living in this area and witnessing first-hand the challenges, discrimination and structural and

social oppression my neighbours face. I have faced some discrimination as a woman and as someone living in an economically 'disadvantaged' area that others perceive negatively: however, I have (in society's terms) the advantage of an education and 'privilege' accorded me through being white, straight, cis- and identifying as a Christian. I have sought to learn through listening and dialogue, through critical reflection and action. My life experience, my identity and the westernised approach to education in which I have been schooled all shape how I approach and understand the processes of teaching and learning and the subject matter of the module. Despite some struggles through this PhD journey, with a lack of confidence in my academic ability and 'imposter' syndrome (Sakulku, 2011), my experiences of education have been predominantly positive. However, I understand this is not the case for many young people in school and students in higher education, particularly those who are likely to want to use their own challenging life experience to train as youth workers and help others. I have sought to prioritise the voice, feelings, and experiences of the students involved in this study and the meanings they attach to their experiences. In analysing and categorising their experiences, I recognise that the interpretations are my own, seen through my life lens. I have sought to treat them with the same great thoughtfulness and care with which they were shared with me.

1.7 Outline of the Thesis

In Chapter Two, I explore how the term 'values' is used: in everyday use; in youth work - particularly in relation to other terms often used synonymously or together with values in the youth work literature, such as 'principles' and 'ethics'; and how it is used in this study. I briefly look at the intersection of values and youth work; and finally explore the literature around developing professional values in youth work.

The practice of youth work as outlined briefly above is often referred to as a practice of 'informal education'. Chapter Three explores the development of informal education as a theory of the process of youth work; and the literature of informal education. It explores how informal education has been taken up within youth work and some of the common misunderstandings of its practice.

Chapter Four outlines my research design, a longitudinal case study, using interviews and data collected through journals, and the rationale for the choices I made – in particular, why I

chose the research site and how I managed some of the ethical dilemmas arising from that choice. I describe how I arrived at the focal question, the data collection methods I employed and my approach to analysis.

Chapter Five revisits the context for the research and outlines the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination module curriculum, along with my rationale for its design. I then offer a brief introduction to the six, core research participants who took part in the three-phase interview element of the empirical research.

Having met the participants in the previous chapter, Chapter Six examines and analyses their 'starting position' at the point of the first interview. In it, I outline and analyse students' 'journey' into youth work; what motivated them to undertake youth worker education; how they discussed and described their personal and professional values, their understanding of the connection between them and how values influenced their practice. It reveals the close connection between student's personal values and their youth work practice at this stage, in particular the helpful and unhelpful ways in which their personal values and practice habits shaped the relationships they developed with young people. Students demonstrated a concern to fulfil their duty as a youth worker and to perform well, including in discussions of youth work values, where they felt the pressure to 'know' the list of NOS values and 'say the right thing'. This concern often led in practice to instinctive, rather than considered reactions at this stage. The role of emotion in constraining students' ability to act on their values also became apparent.

Chapter Seven explores the development of the six core participants' values as described by them and evidenced in their second and third interviews. It follows the themes of the interview questions, first examining their growing understanding of the term 'values'; then exploring the development of their personal values as a result of their learning. Next, I look at students' understanding of youth work values and how they worked with these; concluding with exploration of the connection between personal and professional values, strategies students used for managing the 'gap' between them and then how they managed to synthesise their personal and professional values, in order to 'bring themselves' to their professional role.

Chapter Eight focuses on the students' use of learning journals, coupled with the paired learning exercise employed in the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination module, as a way of

supporting students to develop reflexivity and to engage in key values development work. I explore the students' general approach to journal writing before delineating and analysing four themes arising from the students' use of journals:

- Making meaning and sense of the emotional aspects of their learning journey
- Developing a habit of self-awareness and reflection
- Developing awareness of and ability to work with difference
- Processing theory and linking it to practice

The conclusion outlines the usefulness of journals, coupled with the paired learning exercise in students' values development.

Chapter Nine reviews the aims of the thesis, draws together the research findings and considers their implications for understanding how students develop their professional values in qualifying education and how educators can effectively support this process. The chapter findings are summarised and key themes, identified by students as helpful in their values development, are highlighted. The research methodology and its impact on the process and findings are also considered. Building on these key themes, I highlight the implications of the research findings for the practice of educating youth workers, making recommendations for future practice.

Chapter Two: Values in Youth Work

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how the term 'values' is used: in everyday use; in youth work (particularly in relation to other terms often used synonymously or together with values in the youth work literature, such as 'standards', 'principles' and 'ethics'); and in this study. It then examines the place of values in youth work; the development of the professional values of youth work; and finally explores what the literature says about developing professional values in youth work.

2.2 Thinking about Values

Discussion of values is not straightforward (Timms, 1983; Banks, 2012:7; Moss, 2007:4). Are values relative or absolute, public or personal, subjective or objective? Do some values have intrinsic worth and universal application or are they simply preferences, which may vary over time and context? (Halstead, 1996; Beckett, Maynard & Jordan, 2017). These questions are particularly challenging due to the diverse and pluralist nature of the contemporary world (Sercombe, 2010:37). Not only are values themselves hotly disputed – as can be seen in any newspaper discussion about the merits of Brexit, immigration, the NHS, the welfare state, economic and trade policy, no-platforming policies versus free speech, the rights of trans* women to self-identify as women versus the rights of cis-women in accessing 'women-only' facilities – but the terminology employed to discuss values can be complex and undifferentiated, with the term values variously used to denote: things which we consider have intrinsic worth (such as beauty, honesty); principles and standards (such as justice and equality); or simply personal and social preferences.

In everyday usage, the term '*values*' is employed broadly to refer to those ideas, opinions or beliefs which are considered good, worthy, morally right or important in life: '*the moral principles and beliefs or accepted standards of a person or social group*,' (Collins Dictionary). Values are most often talked about in the plural – '*My values…*', '*Society's values'*, '*Youth work values*' – implying a number of values that cohere with integrity. When used in this way, Shaver and Strong (1982:17) suggest it is helpful to think of '*values*' as

> our standards and principles for judging worth. They are the criteria by which we judge 'things' (people, objects, ideas, actions and situations) to be good, worthwhile and desirable; or on the other hand, bad, worthless, despicable; or, of course, somewhere in between these extremes.

Like the Collins definition, Shaver's and Strong's use of '*our* standards and principles….' indicates that values are both personal and public: they are shared and embodied by groups of people as well as being personally adopted and owned by individuals. A pre-requisite for functioning social groups and institutions is that members agree and adopt the shared values of the group (Halstead, 1996:7).

When we talk of *the value of* something, we are referring to our judgment of its worth (our *valuing*), whether we choose to measure that worth in financial terms, in terms of social goods or by some other measure. Although the verb '*to value'* generally denotes that we rate highly the 'object' of our valuing, it can be used broadly to describe a wide variety of feelings, attitudes or convictions towards many types of items. We can say: '*I value my dishwasher*', '*I really valued that day off*', '*I value kindness*' and '*I value social justice*' – objects, experiences, qualities or ideals that we place varying degrees of importance on for various lengths of time – from which we can imply or infer different types of valuing and worth. Many things can be valued (*regarded as valuable)* – people, objects, qualities such as beauty or imagination, experiences, principles, beliefs and ideologies (Banks, 2001:62-63; 2012:7-8), but it is worth noting that what '*we value'* and '*values*', in the sense of moral principles, beliefs or standards, are not coterminous.

2.2.1 Values: beliefs, convictions, preferences or choices?

In his seminal work on values, the American sociologist Milton Rokeach (1973:5) provides a thoughtful and an often referred to (eg. Beckett & Maynard, 2005:8; Young, 2006:45) definition of a value as:

> an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence.

Values may sometimes be described as *choices*, *preferences*, *opinions* or *attitudes* (eg. Beckett, Maynard & Jordan, 2017:4). In contrast, Rokeach's choice of the phrase '*an enduring*

belief' suggests he considers it is more appropriate to view values as having the nature of considered convictions, ideals to which we are more deeply committed on a sustained basis than the words *choice* or *preference* might convey. A distinction, then, can be made between '***values*** *which are strong, semi-permanent underlying and sometimes inexplicit dispositions; and* ***attitudes****, which are shallow, weakly held and highly variable views and opinions*' (Marshall, 1998, emphasis mine).

2.2.2 Values, principles and standards

Collins Dictionary and Shaver and Strong (*ibid*) both use the terms 'principles' and 'standards' in their definition of values (see definitions above). These terms are often used together or even interchangeably along with values in value-discussions, as can be seen in the youth work literature below. However they are not always being applied to the same ideas, nor do their uses always carry the same meaning, particularly when used in professional occupational discourse, as in 'ethical principles and standards'. In the two definitions above, principles and standards are used in a more general sense to mean: foundational truths, propositions or essential norms, in the case of principles; and a level of quality, a benchmark or a measure, in the case of standards. The more specific meanings of 'ethical principles and standards' used in professional discourse are discussed below in Section 2.3.2 and outlined in Table 2 on page 40.

2.2.3 Values, judgements and action

It is possible to see from the discussion above, showing the link from broad belief to practice standard, engaging with values involves action of various kinds, both in selecting and applying values. The very act of choosing to 'hold' a particular value or set of values requires us to make a decision, to form a judgement about which course of action or end state is preferable. Rokeach's (*ibid*) definition highlights that values relate both to:

- our ways of acting, our 'doing' (mode of conduct), such as telling the truth or forgiving; and
- our goals, the ideal state we are aiming for, our 'being' (end state of existence), such as freedom or justice (Young, 2006:45).

Having chosen our values, we need to make further judgements about how we apply and implement those values in action in our lives, which is where ethical deliberation and action come in. Values precipitate thinking, judging and action; they are intended to be 'visible' in

our being and doing. Values are assumed to be our guides to action (Halstead, 1996:5; Beckett, Maynard & Jordan, 2017:4) and we are expected to live out, embody and 'put into practice' what we profess, to 'walk the talk' (Jeffs & Smith, 2005:98).

It is often assumed in the literature on values, that we consider, evaluate and select our values and then deliberatively act upon them. In an idealised situation, our chosen values would inform our thinking, judging and behaviour in a conscious and virtuous way, through considered reasoning and judicious choice of action. However, further consideration of the connection between values and action reveals a more complex picture. We may profess a value we aspire to act upon, but, for various reasons, we may not be able to enact it, perhaps through lack of skill, courage, commitment, resource or other intrinsic or contingent constraint (Banks 2010:19). We may feel obliged to say we subscribe to a value, perhaps because of our job or position, or because it is socially unacceptable not to, even though we do not accede to it in reality and do not intend to act on it. And we each will have acquired values unconsciously through our upbringing and socialisation, values that we take for granted because of their ubiquity; and which, despite their influence on our thinking and behaviour, often remain unexamined (Moss 2007:5). These unexamined 'values-in-use', embedded through enculturation and habit, are not always congruent with our 'espoused' values. I am drawing here on the work of Argyris and Schön (1974:6-7) on the difference between what people say they will do in a given situation, what they refer to as an '*espoused theory of action'* and what people actually do in that situation, what they refer to as *'theory-in-use'*.

> When someone is asked how he [sic] would behave under certain circumstances, the answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which he gives allegiance, and which, upon request, he communicates to others. However, the theory that actually governs his actions is his theory-in-use.

In a similar way, it is possible to draw a distinction between the 'espoused values' to which people give allegiance when asked; and the actual 'values-in-use' that people often unconsciously draw on, or revert to, in a given situation; habitual positions, actions and responses acquired through a process of unconscious socialisation. In any of these situations, where our espoused values and our values-in-use are not sufficiently congruent, we are highly likely to be questioned, doubted, labelled 'tragically inconsistent' or worse, as

happens frequently to politicians, for example, when they are caught out doing the opposite of what they are proposing everyone else should do via policy (Ratcliffe, 2016; Horton, 2017).

The relationship between our values and actions is a nuanced one. Although values are expected to consciously guide our actions, it is also possible that reflection on our actions may reveal to us values of which we were previously unaware. We may find ourselves in situations where we need to recognise and own the 'gap' between the values to which we aspire and those that we can enact at any given moment; and we may need to acknowledge that we profess values under duress to which we knowingly do not subscribe. All these are real possibilities within youth worker education and practice and are reflected in this study.

2.2.4 Values, morals and ethics

The relationship, then, between values and action is a close and complex one. Our values are expected to inform our deliberations about: what it is we should (or should not) do; how we should (or should not) go about doing it; and the end goal to which we should (or should not) aspire (Rokeach 1973). Discussions of 'right' behaviour or 'virtuous' action moves us into the realm of 'morals' and 'ethics'; and so it is helpful at this stage to briefly explore and differentiate between these two terms.

Philosophers and other theorists sometimes draw a distinction between *morals*, concerned with what is the right or wrong thing to do, and *ethics*, the philosophical enquiry into the basis of morals or moral judgement (Pring, 2000:142; Banks, 2012:4-8). Banks (2010:11) notes that in English, the term *ethics* is used in two ways:

- in the singular, it is used synonymously with moral philosophy, as in 'I am studying ethics' (Banks, 2009:16), the same sense in which philosophers use the term, as mentioned above;
- in the plural, it has a similar meaning to morals, denoting '*the norms or standards of behaviour people follow concerning what is regarded as good or bad, right or wrong'* (Banks, 2012:5).

The Greek and Latin roots of *ethics* and *morals* have similar original meanings – the Latin *mores* (morals) and the Greek *ethos* (ethics) both mean habits or customs (Banks, *ibid*). Within youth work, the term ethics tends to be used in the plural sense, to describe discussions of good and right action in youth work (Roberts, 2009; Banks, 2010; Sercombe, 2010). Both Banks (2010:xi) and Sercombe (2010:3) refer to the study and theory of moral

and ethical issues explicitly as 'moral philosophy'. Young (2006:3, 2010:93) uses the term in the same way, when she argues that the practice of youth work can be thought of as …

> An exercise in moral philosophy, insofar as it enables and supports young people to examine what they consider to be 'good or bad', 'right or wrong', 'desirable or undesirable' in relation to self and others.

In line with these writers, in this study the phrase 'moral philosophy' will be used when discussing philosophical enquiry into moral judgement (ethics in the singular); and 'ethics' (plural) and 'morals' used interchangeably to refer to discussions of appropriate forms of behaviour.

2.2.5 Values, worldviews and faith-based values

We have thought about the nature of values and how they relate to principles, standards, morals and ethics; and recognised that values shape our being and our doing, although in complex and not necessarily conscious ways. This section considers the relationship between our values and our worldview: the overarching framework of beliefs from which we view reality and make sense of life and the world.

Worldviews are, by definition, comprehensive: they are ideologies, philosophies, theologies, movements or religions that offer a description of:

> the universe and life within it, both in terms of what is and what ought to be […] what exists and what does not (either in actuality, or in principle), what objects or experiences are good or bad, and what objectives, behaviors [*sic*], and relationships are desirable or undesirable. A worldview defines what can be known or done in the world, and how it can be known or done. In addition to defining what goals can be sought in life, a worldview defines what goals should be pursued. Worldviews include assumptions that may be unproven, and even unprovable, but these assumptions are superordinate, in that they provide the epistemic and ontological foundations for other beliefs within a belief system. (Koltko-Rivera, 2004:4).

Religions are the most obvious examples of worldviews, providing a comprehensive belief-system about the world and our place in it, defining what goals should be pursued and the ultimate purpose and end destination of life. However, other 'faith' or non-faith-based belief-systems, such as humanism, atheism, and some political ideologies could also be considered as 'worldviews', providing, as they do, a comprehensive framework of beliefs and values akin to a religion.

Rockeach (1973:6-7) distinguishes between worldviews, beliefs and values, positing three kinds of beliefs of different orders and locating values within them:

1) descriptive or existential beliefs, those capable of being true or false;
2) evaluative beliefs, wherein the object of belief is judged to be good or bad; and
3) prescriptive or proscriptive beliefs, wherein some means or end of action is judged to be desirable or undesirable.

A value is a belief of the third kind—a prescriptive or proscriptive belief.

The values deriving from our worldview, for example respect for life, lead to an understanding of right and wrong ways of living, for example, moral positions on particular significant issues, such as abortion and a woman's right to choose, sexual relationships, gender roles, and particular views on alcohol and drugs. These moral positions can be challenging to examine when tied to faith-based values, particularly if 'right or holy living' is considered a pre-requisite for entry into a 'life after death'. Debates around moral issues that to some operate on an entirely human and time-bound level, may take on a spiritual and eternal significance for people of faith. Beckett and Maynard (2005:49) note that it '*is a curious fact that two people can disagree profoundly on the fundamental nature of the universe, and yet work together quite satisfactorily on the problems thrown up by every day life*'. If people hold similar value-positions around abortion, for example, they may well be able to overlook their very different worldviews, such as a Christian and a Muslim who both believe it is wrong to 'kill an unborn child'. The difficulty comes when people's worldviews cause them to hold radically opposing value-positions that are intrinsically woven into their worldviews; for example a radical Christian feminist and a conservative Christian.

Griffiths' (2001:xiv) definition of a religion as '*a form of life that seems to those who belong to is to be comprehensive, incapable of abandonment, and of central importance'* is a reminder of the all-encompassing nature of developed and considered worldviews. Values that derive from worldviews both support worldviews and are integral to those worldviews. Consequently, it can be extremely difficult to re-assess one value in isolation, as that one value is intimately entwined within the whole belief system, and the fear is that the whole worldview unravels (Escobar, 2014:64-81), somewhat akin to pulling a loose thread from a knitted jumper – initially it is only one isolated thread being pulled, but without realising, the whole jumper can become an unravelled heap of wool on the floor. This is why it can be extremely challenging and painful for adherents of developed worldviews to engage in a real dialogue with those from a differing worldview, and even harder for them to critically

examine, evaluate and change some of their value positions derived from their worldviews, such as faith-based values. This was a real concern for students in this study, as they sought to engage in a dialogue between their faith-based values and the professional values of youth work; and to examine some of their fundamental beliefs, values and associated moral positions. They did this with great respect for the young people they sought to engage, striving to ensure their faith-based values did not operate as a barrier to the young people they worked with; hoping, yet struggling, to initiate and engage in constructive and productive value and faith-based worldview discussions. Frequently, they talked of wrestling with themselves, as they sought to meet the presenting needs of young people, whilst trying to reconcile these actions-as-professionals with personal moral positions that contradicted their actions.

Another point to note specifically in relation to faith-based values is the move, in liberal pluralistic societies, to relegate religion from public discourse into the private realm (Rorty, 1994), on the basis that it acts as a 'conversation stopper', threatening communication between citizens. This has resulted in religion and faith-based values rarely being discussed in a constructive way in the public realm, despite religious faith '*undoubtedly [being] one of the main sources from which people derive their systems of values*' (Beckett & Maynard, 2005:48). For many welfare workers and those they work with, a belief in a religious faith and membership of a faith community provides a deep sense of security, meaning, purpose, personal validation, belonging and well-being. Holding a particular faith and its attendant practices can be a crucial part of people's identity (Maynard, Beckett & Jordan 2017:38); and yet there are few current public examples of how to engage in constructive conversation and dialogue with each other, our faith positions and contemporary issues, in a spirit of respect, listening and genuine enquiry. Instead, we have models that prize shaming, belittling and winning an argument at all costs, without any consideration for how we might live together beyond this episode. Consequently, it has become increasingly difficult to constructively explore, and where necessary challenge, the validity of value positions that we believe do not make for human well-being. This is a particular concern for qualifying professionals in welfare occupations, such as social and youth work. Often our socialised default position is to keep our personal values firmly confined to the 'private' realm of our 'personal life', as if there are clear boundaries between the two. This makes the process of examining our personal values in the on-going task of professional values development extremely difficult, if not impossible, particularly if those values are derived from a faith position.

2.3 Values Discourse in Youth Work Literature

Values, then, are our beliefs about what is worthy or important, our criteria for judging worth. This involves deliberation about what is 'good', what has 'worth' and inevitably, in a social context, which values have wider applicability and greater validity, leading to discussions of better and worse, good and bad, right and wrong and how this thinking impacts and is worked out in our actions. In the next section, I will explore how the term 'values' is used in the youth work literature and how values are treated and discussed.

2.3.1 Delineating values in youth work

As in everyday usage, the term 'values' is often employed broadly within the youth work literature to refer to values, 'core values', principles and standards, its meaning somewhat taken for granted. Sapin (2013:3) describes youth work as a '*professional practice with young people based on certain core values and principles'* and writes about '*applying values and principles to practice'.* Generally, in the context of youth work, it is understood that values refer to a deeper level of commitment than the words 'choice', 'preference' or 'attitude' might convey. Like Rokeach (*ibid*), Sapin (2013:248) employs the word 'beliefs' in her definition of values: '*The fundamental beliefs that underpin a perspective or profession…*'. Banks (2001:62; 2012:7) explains that '*in the context of professional practice, the use of the term 'belief' reflects the status that values have as stronger than mere opinions or preferences'*.

When discussing practice 'standards' in relation to ethical issues, Banks and Imam (2000:68) write;

> the current usage of the term 'standards' …… also encompasses what we might think of as 'ethical principles' or 'core values'.

They go on to draw a helpful distinction between principles and rules – '*Principles have much broader scope than rules, tending to apply to all people in all circumstances*' – and reference Beauchamp's (1996: 80-1; in Banks & Imam, 2000:68) definition of a principle as:

> .. a fundamental standard of conduct on which many other standards and judgments depend. A principle is an essential norm in a system of thought or belief, forming a basis of moral reasoning in that system.

There is a similarity between Beauchamp's definition of a principle and Rokeach's (*ibid*) definition of a value, explaining why values are often discussed and framed as principles,

particularly when seeking to apply values to practice, as in the National Youth Agency's (2004) document '*Ethical Conduct in Youth Work*', subtitled '*a statement of values and principles*'.

Despite the subtle differences outlined above, in youth work literature the terms 'values' and 'principles' are frequently used coterminously to refer to the broad beliefs which underpin the work and the principles that describe the ways these values are worked out in practice, for example, the broad value of respect for young people sits alongside the principle of the voluntary relationship in the National Occupational Standards list of core values for youth work (LSIS, 2012).

For the purpose of this study, I have chosen to adopt Banks' (2001:62; 2012:8) straightforward definition of a 'value' and her definition of 'social work values' (2012:8) (the latter adapted for a youth work context), as working definitions for the purpose of this study:

> A value is a particular type of belief concerning what is regarded as worthy or valuable.
>
> The term 'youth work values' refers to a range of beliefs about what is regarded as worthy or valuable in a youth work context – general beliefs about the nature of the good society, general principles about how to achieve this through actions, and the desirable qualities or character traits of professional practitioners.

2.3.2 Values, ethical principles and practice standards in youth work

I noted earlier that the relationship between values and actions is a close and complex one. From a simplistic point of view, the values we hold shape: 1) the way we do things – being honest and respectful in the way we treat others; and 2) the end goals we work towards – seeking to establish justice and equality (Rokeach 1973). Youth work, as a value-based occupation, assumes that judgments about what action to take will be made in the light of deliberation on what makes for young people's well-being, informed by particular values (NYA, 2004; LSIS, 2012).

For this reason, in discourses about values in welfare occupations such as social work and youth work, values are also frequently discussed hand-in-hand with (and are sometimes assumed to encompass) morals, ethics and virtues, as writers seek to work out the link between professional values (as abstract ideals) and principles governing occupational

actions (NYA, 2004; Banks, 2004:4-5, 134-148; Young, 2006; Banks, 2009; Banks & Gallagher, 2009; Banks, 2012; Sapin, 2013:5-8; Beckett, Maynard, & Jordan, 2017).

This is certainly true in youth work, where discussion of youth work's professional values is closely associated with discussions of the ethical considerations arising from these value positions, which in turn leads to deliberation of ethical principles and practice standards. Banks and Imam (2000:69) discuss 'Ethical Principles/Underpinning Values'; Banks (2001:6-3) uses '*professional values'* to refer to '*a set of ethical or moral principles that mean something to people doing a particular type of job'*; the National Youth Agency's (2004) document *Ethical Conduct in Youth Work* is '*a statement of values and principles…*'; Banks (2009) writes about '*Ethics and Values in Work with Young People*'; Roberts (2009) discusses values at some length in '*Youth Work Ethics'*. This can be confusing, particularly when the terms 'values', 'principles' and 'standards' are employed in undifferentiated ways. Banks' (2015:53) definition of the terms in relation to social work, shown below in Table 2, helps to explain why this is. Her delineation of the terms reveal the close relationship between the concepts to which they refer; and trace the connection between an overarching service ideal, the broad values which underpin this ideal and the principles and standards which arise out of these values.

Table 2 From service ideal to ethical standards

Service Ideal	Values	Ethical Principles / Qualities	Ethical Standards
Core purpose or mission of the profession. E.g. Promotion of social welfare	***Broad beliefs about the nature of the good society and the role of social work in this.*** E.g. Human dignity and worth; social justice	***Principles of action and qualities of character that promote these values.*** E.g. Respect basic human rights; reliability; honesty	***Based on and applying the values and principles or qualities. May be used as a benchmark for assessment of professional behavior.*** E.g. Communicate with services users in a language and by means that they understand.

Although written in relation to social work, the definitions in Table 2 can be usefully applied to professions generally: this is helpful to our discussion of values in youth work. Banks suggests that values support and underpin the core aim of the work; principles are developed

from applying values to practice and broadly describe actions or qualities that promote these values; and standards emerge from seeking to describe how the principles translate more explicitly into action – essentially what good practice looks like. 'Values' is often used as a generic term, a broad category, to encompass all elements (sub-categories) of the practice that derive from and relate closely to values, such as principles and standards, even though they are not quite of the same order.

The following section explores the literature around ethics in youth work, drawing on the literature of social work, an allied profession, where useful.

2.3.3 A shift towards ethics in youth work

Youth work has witnessed a shift from discussions about values alone (Davies, 1972; Smith, 1982:29-33; National Youth Bureau, 1990:32-33; Banks, 2001:62-73) to discussions more predominantly about ethics (Banks & Imam, 2000; National Youth Agency, 2004), with three books – two new monographs, (Roberts, 2009; Sercombe, 2010) and one second edition, edited collection (Banks 2010) – dedicated to youth work ethics emerging around the same time. These books are not simply statements of 'standardised' ethical principles with easily digested and applied rules for action. They outline various ethical theories, in order to offer workers a more nuanced understanding of approaches to thinking about and framing ethical dilemmas, supporting the worker to 'think for themselves' and recognise the various factors at play in ethical decision making. This is a reflection of the complex and diverse situations in which youth workers are required to operate, balancing the competing interests of and responsibilities to the young person, the organisational context, the community and state agendas, the funders' agendas and their own personal convictions. This is most likely in response to the increasing professionalisation of youth work (Banks & Imam, 2000:67; Banks 2010:xi), with resulting attempts to 'standardise' the values of a very diverse occupation, encompassing work done by statutory, voluntary, faith-based, cultural and political organisations, each working from diverse values, motives and with a variety of end goals. The impact of increasing professionalisation is also illustrated in the shift in youth work thinking and discussion over the past 40 years from values understood as *beliefs* (considered convictions) to values understood as encompassing the *principles* derived from them, where beliefs might be understood as intrinsic personally or culturally held convictions, and principles, as extrinsic, collectively owned ways of working.

Determining what represents 'good practice' is one of the major concerns of professional occupations. Traditional professions would self-regulate largely through Ethical Codes of Conduct, relying on *ethical principles* to guide practitioners' 'on-the-ground' decision-making (Greenwood, 1957; Jones et al, 1982; Banks, 2004; Sercombe 2010). These ethical principles, although still seeking to be generalisable, are practice oriented and can be viewed as the link between the more general core values of a profession and how these might be best realised in practice. The more recent writing in youth work about values as ethical principles can be understood in this way (National Youth Agency, 2004; Roberts, 2009:86-106; Banks, 2010:8-11; Sercombe, 2010:54-63).

Ethical theories, drawn from moral philosophy, are outlined and critiqued in discourses of youth work ethics in order to help youth workers think and act ethically. This can be thought of as ethical 'seeing, being and doing': recognising and 'seeing' the ethical dimensions of dilemmas; 'being' virtuous practitioners; and 'acting' ethically (Banks, 2010; Sercombe, 2010). Theories are often categorised into 'principle-based approaches' – those that seek to establish core ethical principles which can be applied universally across all situations – and 'character- and relationship-based approaches' – those approaches to ethical deliberation which recognise the situated and contextual nature of ethical action, and the character, dispositions, motives and relationships of the moral actors and those in relation to whom they act (see Banks, 2004:78-94). Principle-based approaches to ethics include: *Kantianism*, a deontological or duty-based approach; and *consequentialist* (teleological) approaches, including *utilitarianism* (which posits that the moral worth of an action lies in the extent to which its outcomes will secure the greatest good for the greatest number of people), *ethical egoism*, (after the eighteenth century philosopher and economist Adam Smith, who argues that everyone's best interests would be served if each individual followed their own personal interests), and *ethics drawn from Marx's theories* (action which brings about a more just society and which enables people to share equally in the means of production is considered ethical). Character-based and relationships-based approaches to ethics include: *virtue-ethics*, after Aristotle (an approach which draws on the character and disposition of the actor as moral agent, who always seeks to act virtuously for human flourishing (Young, 2006; Banks & Gallagher, 2009; Bessant, 2009)), and *relationship-based* approaches, which prioritise an '*ethic of care*' (Noddings, 2003).

Both Banks *(ibid)* and Sercombe *(ibid)* note that youth workers might find it helpful to draw on all these theoretical positions to help in their 'ethics work' in a youth work context, 'ethics

work' being a term Banks (2016:36) uses to refer to the effort practitioners '*put into seeing ethically salient aspects of situations, developing themselves as good practitioners, working out the right course of action and justifying who they are and what they have done*'.

A number of elements, related to the idea of 'ethics work' can be drawn from what has been written about youth work ethics:

1. It is expected that youth workers will be able to recognise ethical issues, what Banks (2010:19) calls 'ethical sensitivity'.
2. Workers are expected to think, reason and deliberate about issues, rather than simply following a universally applicable set of rules (Banks, *ibid*).
3. It is anticipated that this ethical thinking is done as part of an ongoing process of dialogue, reflection, discussion and debate with others, not as an exercise on one's own (National Youth Agency, 2004:10; Sercombe, 2010:43). The 'others' may be young people, in the context of helping them reason through issues, or other workers and colleagues.
4. This ethical reasoning is carried out with reference to a professional framework, recognising professional responsibilities, obligations and opportunities (Banks, 2010:13).
5. Ethical action also involves qualities of both character and competence (Banks, *ibid:*19); even if clear about the ethically appropriate course of action, workers need the courage and commitment to realise the action and the knowledge and competence to be able to do so effectively.

The purpose of this section on ethics is not to explore the various ethical theories, an area far too large in scope for this study, but to understand how awareness of them is intended to impact on a youth worker's development and application of professional values to practice. We can see two factors at play here: principle-based approaches require workers to reason and deliberate in a logical (and perhaps an assumed objective) manner about the various ethical considerations in a situation; whereas character and relationship based approaches require workers to recognise the situated-ness of their work and their own personhood, and how these both impact upon their ability to think and act ethically; and to foster relationships and to consider the impact these relationships have on their thinking and action.

Having thought about what is meant by the term 'values' and how the literature of youth work treats values, the next section briefly explores the influence of values on youth work.

2.4 Values' Influence in Youth Work

It is well established that youth work is a 'values-based' activity: both academic and occupational literature support this (Banks, 2001:63, 2009, 2010; Davies, 2005:4; LSIS, 2012; Ord, 2007; Sapin 2013). In Chapter 1 I introduced youth work and the distinctive features of the practice that distinguish it from other educational and welfare occupations, such as social work and schooling (Davies, 2015). I then recognised the close connection between those distinctive features and the way the National Occupational Standards frame the Values of Youth Work. The earlier discussion of values in this chapter would suggest that the NOS 'Values' resemble practice / ethical principles, as delineated in Table 2 on page 40.

Values operate in youth work, as in life, in many ways (Timms, 1983). For the purposes of this study, I would like to draw attention to four ways in which values 'intersect' with and shape youth work, that will help in understanding some of the different value positions research participants were required to navigate.

Firstly, values shape the aims, purpose and end goal of youth work: describing the ideal society and conditions for young people, the reason youth work exists. For youth work as a professional practice, young people's well-being, equality and social justice are overarching end goals. That may differ for other expressions of work with young people: for example, the state may engage in work with young people to ensure their social compliance, or, in the case of pre-war Britain, that young men become fit fighting units (Jeffs, 1979). For a Christian organisation, it may be establishing the kingdom of God amongst young people, or that young people come to their own faith. These large scale aims, shaped by our values, are always present in work, but are often hidden, not noticed or articulated. As a result, end goals can be an unrecognised source of tension.

Secondly, values shape the motives of workers engaged in youth work: these are workers' personal reasons for becoming youth workers and working with young people. For those with strong value positions, for example, strong religious or political views, engaging in youth work may be a way of 'living out' their values and leading a virtuous life. de St Croix's

(2016) recent research into grassroots youth work showed workers who had a strong personal motivation for their engagement in youth work and who were passionate about their practice. For others, it may be the opportunity to 'put something back' into a community or neighbourhood they feel has helped them, to perform a 'social good'.

Thirdly, values shape the principles and practices of youth work: as described in Chapter One, youth work values play an important role in shaping the distinctive practice of youth work and the way workers approach their relationships with young people. The National Occupational Standards define the occupational values of youth work and the standards ensure appropriate competence and standard of work. The values impact on issues of power and control in relationships and the approach workers take to informality, task versus process and learning.

Fourthly, values are the overt curriculum of youth work: Young (2006) argues that youth work is an exercise in moral philosophy. Framed as an educational practice that fosters learning through and about life (Davies and Gibson, 1967; Jeffs & Smith, 2005), value issues inevitably become the content of discussions with young people, as workers help them explore why they took the action they did; and how they choose between two competing options.

Youth workers not only need to understand the influence of values on the end goals of youth work and to be aware of their own personal motivations for engaging in youth work; they require an appreciation of how the values influence the practice of youth work and an ability to realise these values in action; as well as the ability to support young people through the same process of values exploration and realisation. The final section of this chapter explores the literature on developing values in professional practice.

2.5 Fostering Professional Values in Youth Worker Education

There is very little literature on the pedagogy and praxis of youth worker education (Belton & Frost, 2010:xi). Those accounts that do exist are descriptions of training courses from previous eras of youth work, prior to the degree level status required of JNC qualified workers in 2010. Watkins (1972) reported on the one-year Diploma in Youth Work course offered, between 1961 and 1970, by the National Training College for the Training of Youth Leaders; and Kitto (1986) outlined the Certificate in Youth and Community Work distance-

learning course, run by the YMCA National College between 1980 and 1985. Both accounts detail course aims, structure, content and some detail of the teaching and learning strategies employed, in addition to the rationale behind these choices. As such, they are rich and interesting historical documents. Both are written from the perspective of the staff experiences: they do not contain a student perspective.

There is even less literature on how youth work students develop their professional values in the context of qualifying education. There are some hints at what might be involved to be found within the literature on youth work: for example, at the end of her final chapter in *The Art of Youth Work*, where she argues that youth work is an exercise in moral philosophy, Kerry Young (2006:110) adds the following:

> The implication for youth worker training and development is that workers need to be provided with the opportunity for their own self-exploration, the examination of their own values, the development of their own critical skills and the enlargement of their own capacity for moral philosophy.

Jeffs and Smith (1990b) devote a chapter to 'Educating informal educators' at the end of *Using Informal Education*. Although they recognise the need for 'informal education experiences' in the education of workers, they also strongly argue for the use of a range of more formal methods. They offer a list of competency areas that educators may want to consider when designing curricula and the associated teaching and learning strategies, summarised below (*ibid*:134-143):

- the ability to engage with and learn from cultures in a critically reflective way;
- engaging with informal and everyday social situations (rather than only with groups and settings where the worker is in control);
- developing an understanding of what makes 'for the good';
- fostering critical thinking;
- developing autonomy and a disposition for 'the good', rather than the 'correct';
- building a practice repertoire of examples, images, understandings and actions;
- paying attention to their identity and role;
- enabling dialogue;
- handling the thinking and action of others; and
- reflecting on and evaluating processes and outcomes.

Although some areas relate more overtly to supporting values development, eg. developing an understanding of what makes for 'the good', there is a close relationship between each

area and values development. Jeffs and Smith give a clear rationale for why these are important areas of learning for students, but not a consideration of the teaching and learning strategies best employed to help foster these capacities.

Banks and Gallagher (2009:209-211) offer four suggestions for social worker education to promote the '*thick and complex [social] virtue*' that they advocate is required for integrity in professional life. They are equally applicable to youth worker education. Firstly, they advocate for spaces where students can '*discuss, debate, refine and develop a sense of ownership of the professional values'* (ibid:210) a process which should involve questioning, interpreting and exercising critical reflection and reflexivity. Secondly, they suggest workers need to develop an awareness of the professional tradition within which they are working and an ability to locate themselves within it. Thirdly, workers need the opportunity to practice dialogue and debate in order to learn the skills required to talk in credible and plausible ways about themselves and their work, to themselves and to others. Finally, workers need courage to act in times of adversity: the opportunity to network and build solidarity with other workers is key to this courage.

A fuller consideration of teaching and learning strategies is given in the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Youth and Community Work (2017), which sets out the standards required of graduate Youth and Community Workers and of qualifying degree courses. The statement: describes youth and community work as a practice of informal education (*ibid*:3); recognises the diverse and contested nature of the work and youth worker education (*ibid*:8); acknowledges that youth work is an ethical and '*value-rich activity [...] characterised by its attention to values, principles, purposes and processes'* (*ibid*:9); and defines it as an inclusive and anti-oppressive practice, where '*participation, inclusion, empowerment, partnership and learning are shared values and fundamental principles of practice'* (*ibid*:7).

Having outlined the various educational principles that underpin youth work – such as reflection; democracy and participation; critical collaborative enquiry; and emancipatory practice – the statement asserts the following about programmes of degree-level youth worker education:

- (2.11) programmes are characterised by their democratic ethos, with regard to attention to student voice and participation and to the encouragement of collaborative enquiry and critical engagement with the wider social context of their education. (*ibid*:10)
- (2.13) the process and context of undergraduate education is, as far as possible,

congruent with the educational processes and contexts that practitioners are being trained to use in community settings, whilst recognising the formal and assessed nature of a bachelor's degree. (*ibid*:10)

- (6.1) they draw on the practices of all aspects of the formal/informal education continuum, providing opportunities for learning through reflection, dialogue, debate and peer learning (*ibid*:19)
- (6.2) the promotion of reflection and of reflexivity is central to all teaching, learning and assessment in this subject area (*ibid*:19)
- (6.2) teaching is flexible, adaptable, participative, interactive, intersubjective and collaborative in ways that are consistent with the subject area and congruent with informal and non-formal learning (*ibid:*19)

The statement offers a strong indicator of the aims, methods and ethos of a degree level, qualifying course. However, the tensions inherent in using methods congruent with informal education in an increasingly outcome-focused and target-driven higher education context, although acknowledged (in section 2.13), are not explored.

One notable contribution to the literature on values development is the work of Susan Cooper (2007/8) of Plymouth Marjon University, researching 'Teaching values in pre-qualifying Youth and Community Work Education'. It was reading a paper written by Cooper (2007/8), outlining her study and key findings, that prompted me to undertake this PhD investigation. Cooper's study explored the extent to which the curriculum and approach to teaching on the course at Plymouth Marjon enabled students to '*engage in enquiry in order to develop their understanding of professional values'* (*ibid*:58). She found that students experienced values exploration and critique as a 'risky' enterprise and some students, particularly those early on in their student life, seeking to establish their identity as students, did not feel safe enough to engage in this process in group environments for fear of judgement (*ibid*:62). A research participant commented (*ibid:68*), '*some people …. did express their values at the very beginning and were judged on them … it can be quite intimidating if you were to do that at the very beginning … people are judged on what they say'*. However, this concern was not uniform across the cohort: some students were more able and willing to engage in values discussions (*ibid*:62) and thought that the beginning of the course was a 'prime time' to examine both students' own values and the values of youth work (*ibid*:64). Two points arise from this observation. Firstly, fostering 'safe enough' spaces that enable students to engage in values exploration and critique early on in their youth worker education would be a valuable support to students' professional development. Secondly, these spaces need to allow for a differentiated approach to learning, to permit students to

engage at the levels and pace they feel comfortable, so as to increase the depth of their participation and their confidence (Belton & Frost, 2010).

Cooper's study also raised questions about the connection between personal and professional values, and how students are '*encouraged and enabled to explore the dilemmas created by conflicts between personal and professional values'* (*ibid*:59). Cooper (*ibid*:67) drew on research by Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000:158), which showed that in the early stages of social worker professional development, personal and professional values were 'characterised as oppositional', with the 'personal' seen as being sacrificed to the 'professional', with workers 'hiding' their personal values (Fook et al, *ibid*:57). Cooper's (2007/8:67) study found the opposite in some cases. Participants commented:

> Student 1: *Could you rather say that … rather they put on the professional values but that they don't act on them … they work according to their personal values which are actually detrimental to people they are working with …*
> Student 2: *… so their personal values actually shape the way they perform their professional values … personally I don't think your personal values can ever be pushed back … I think they are always there, I think that you behave professionally but your personal values still drive that…*

I have developed a similar concern based on my own experiences of practice and of teaching students: in pressured situations workers can 'revert' to 'habituated' values and value-based actions which do not reflect professional value positions, despite being familiar with those professional values. By 'habituated' values, I mean those values that students have learned and embedded in their practice and lived experience prior to entering youth worker education. It is only through conscious reflection, 'seeing' oneself in action and then 're-training' oneself through practising new ways of working, that new practice habits, arising from considered values, can be formed (Dewey, 1986, 2008; Kolb, 1984). Interestingly, Cooper suggested that wider, societal culture may play a part in how we balance and manage our personal and professional values, drawing on research from Banks and Williams (1999). Youth worker educators need to be aware of the tendencies Cooper highlights – 'hiding' and 'reverting' – and foster environments which support students in training to understand the inter-relationship between their personal and professional values: not only what they say they would do in theory – their 'espoused values' – but what they draw on in practice – their 'values-in-action' (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

Two themes emerged from the focus groups Cooper drew on in her research (Cooper, 2007/8:68): firstly, the processes required for values development needed to be dialogical, reflective, and collective – approaches which are consonant with youth work values and practices; and secondly, the importance to students of fostering appropriate learning environments that '*allow students to feel safe to explore, question and critique something as sensitive and complex as the value base'*.

Cooper made three recommendations for action (*ibid*:68-70):

1. The curriculum needs to contain 'spaces for reflection'.
2. Teaching and learning strategies need to foster an environment that supports students to develop a deeper approach to learning.
3. Developing professional wisdom in practice relies not only on subject-specific knowledge, but on an '*individual and collective sense of 'being"* (*ibid*:69).

These recommendations all have implications for the teaching and learning strategies employed. Interestingly, Cooper (*ibid*:70) concluded that the 'space for reflection' cannot take place within the formal course programme.

> Our challenge is to create space and time, outside of the formal assessment relationship, outside of the current modular structure where students choose to participate collectively in the process of values development.

I have a fundamental concern with this conclusion: rather than locating values development as central to youth worker education, it implies that values development can be viewed as peripheral – an optional extra – in which students can choose (or not) to participate. Or that discussion of values is too difficult to manage in formal or uncomfortable spaces. Values-literacy – the ability to engage in the discussion, exploration, critique and evaluation of value positions; to interrogate ones professional self and ones practice in the light of these discussions; to consider how value positions impact (ones) practice; and to use this learning to contribute to the ongoing development of the collective professional framework – is an essential core competence of a professional practitioner. Professional practitioners need to have developed the capacity to have such values discussions in work contexts that can be pressured and uncomfortable places. I contend that if values occupy a central, foundational, position in the practice, as the National Occupational Standards (LSIS 2012:2) assert, and that if youth worker education should be '*characterised by its attention to values, principles, purposes and processes'* as the QAA Benchmark Subject Statement (2017:9) asserts, then the

development of values has to take place at the heart of the formal assessed programme of teaching and learning activities, in order for students to understand the centrality of the place of values development to youth work practice. This requires educators to devise creative ways to manage the competing demands of values development – most effectively fostered through the application of informal educational principles and practices to learning strategies – and the demands of formal, accredited, degree-level, higher education.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the concept of values and how values are treated within the youth work literature. It then briefly looked at the influence of values within youth work and finished by considering literature on values development.

The literature paints a clear picture of what youth worker education is intended to achieve in relation to values development in student youth workers; and it advocates a process-led approach congruent with the educational principles and practices of informal education. However, there is little research that contributes to a greater understanding of how to implement the advocated teaching and learning strategies that support such development within the context of youth worker education, with the notable exception of Cooper's (2007/8) work. It was on that basis that I turned to the literature of informal education to support the curricula design for the two modules that I was invited to teach in 2006 (Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination) and 2008 (Informal Education), before I began this investigation. Reading Cooper's work and reflecting on my own teaching experiences propelled me to undertake this investigation into 'how youth work students in qualifying education develop their professional values'.

I have approached the final section of the chapter by looking at literature that focuses on the role of the educator in developing strategies and curricula that foster values development within student youth workers. However, the focal question of this research emphasises students' experience of learning and development. This is an important distinction (Fook et al, 2000:178): what teachers intend to teach is not necessarily what students learn (Graham, 2003). The theory of informal education is particularly helpful in this regard: it is a well-developed theory of learning, which places the experience of the 'learners' at the centre of the endeavour. It is a theory of the processes of learning – informal education does not

specify content, instead paying attention to process, practice and the values that guide the judgements of workers. It expects educators to have a clear sense of the processes they are drawing on to foster learning and the values that guide their action and judgements (as outlined by Jeffs and Smith (1990b:134-143) above). For that reason, I have chosen to explore the development of informal education and the theories, principles and practices underpinning it in some depth in the next chapter, in order to better set the scene for the research; the curricula design of the two modules I taught; the research methods chosen; and students' experiences of professional values development.

Chapter Three: Exploring Informal Education

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the concept of informal education within the field of youth and community work in the UK, tracing the history of its development, the key elements of informal education as popularised by Mark Smith and Tony Jeffs, and the literature that supports, draws upon and develops it. Although there are many conceptions of informal education, which will be explored later in the chapter, Jeffs and Smith (1997, 2005, 2012) use the term specifically to apply to the purposeful yet '*spontaneous process of helping people to learn'*. For them, informal education is

> a process [... that] works through, and is driven by, conversation; involves exploring and enlarging experience; and can take place in any setting. (Jeffs & Smith 2010:xii-xiii)

This is the understanding of informal education on which this chapter draws. The chapter considers the place informal education has found within the more recent theory and practice of youth work and explores the educational philosophies that underpin it.

3.2 Tracing the Development of Informal Education in Youth Work

Although the term 'informal education' is regularly used in youth work literature to broadly describe the educational processes of youth work, it is a relatively new term within the youth work's history and practice, revived principally by Mark K Smith (YMCA George Williams College Tutor and Rank Research Fellow) in the late 1980's (Slovenko & Thompson, 2016). Having identified and promoted the term to denote the educational approaches of youth work (Smith, 1988), Smith then developed and theorised the concept through a significant collaboration and writing partnership with Tony Jeffs (formerly of Durham University); and through

- the work of the YMCA George Williams College, which trained many 'informal educators' (of which I am one) and uniquely offered JNC qualifying diploma and

degree courses in 'Informal and Community Education' during the 1990s and 2000s (almost all other qualifying courses opted for more standard titles, including some form of 'Youth and Community Work' (National Youth Agency, 2010)); and

- the web-based *Encyclopaedia of informal education*, (usually referred to as the 'infed website' found at www.infed.org) provided by the YMCA George Williams College and edited by Smith, which hosts many articles on the theory, practice, theorists and practitioners of informal, community and adult education, and youth work.

The term has since gained traction within the literature and practice of youth and community work (Jeffs & Smith (eds), 1990; 2005; 2010; Deer Richardson & Wolfe (eds), 2001; Batsleer, 2008; 2013a; 2013b; Banks, 2010; Forrest, 2010; Green, 2010; Cartwright, 2012; Jones, 2012; Sapin, 2013; Mills & Kraftl, 2014; Bright, 2015; Pimlott, 2015; Wood, Westwood & Thompson, 2015); whilst also developing, largely independently, in other arenas, such as schools work (Bekerman, Burbules & Silberman-Keller (eds), 2006), in adult education (Jarvis, 2010), and in human resources development within business and industry (Garrick, 1998, Cross, 2006). In these sectors, the terms informal or non-formal *learning* are more often used.

3.2.1 What is informal education?: theory, principles and practice

In their edited collection on 'Youth Work Practice', Jeffs and Smith (2010) define informal education as:

> a process – a way of helping people to learn. For us, informal education works through, and is driven by, conversation; involves exploring and enlarging experience; and can take place in any setting. (Jeffs & Smith, 2010:xii-xiii)

This is a rich definition, referencing elements of the practice that are key to their conception of informal education.

Firstly, informal education involves a purposeful intention to foster learning, rather than learning happening accidentally or incidentally (*ibid*:7-9, 18). Smith argues:

> Learning is a process that is happening all the time; education involves intention and commitment. Education is a moral enterprise that needs to be judged as to whether it elevates and furthers well-being. (Smith, 1999, 2008).

The description of the practice as educational makes clear that practitioners seek to foster change. This requires workers to recognise, understand and be explicit about the values that determine the 'direction' of this change and that guide the actions and intentions of the educator (Jeffs and Smith, 2005:20-21). Smith (1988:xii) proposes the aim of informal education is '*the good life' – eudaimonia* – after Aristotle, '*to enable individuals to pursue autonomously their own well-being'.* Informal education then is not about teaching facts, but about equipping young people with wisdom for living – Aristotle's *phronesis* – so they can navigate life wisely and virtuously (Young, 2006).

Secondly, this learning activity is a process, negotiated 'in-situ' as it is happening, rather than having a predetermined curriculum focussed on achieving certain outcomes (Jeffs & Smith, 2005:72-83). Smith (1994) goes further by framing informal education as a '*praxis'*: the continual interaction of 'theory' and 'committed action' (informed by values) through a process of '*reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it'* (Freire, 1972:28).

Thirdly, conversation is central to this spontaneous process of learning: it both mediates the process and is supported by the idea of process. Learning is negotiated and fostered through the conversation itself. In Jeffs' and Smith's conception, conversation infers dispositions towards: a democratic practice, through fellowship, negotiation and association (2005:41-57); a respect for people and a commitment to certain values (*ibid*:94-109); and an understanding of personhood (Smith, 1994:36-38), based on the notion that our selves are formed in interaction with others (Mead, 1934) – there can be no separate self apart from others (Gadamer, 1979; see also Smith, 1996b, 2001). This in turn draws attention to the need to critically examine how broader forces operate to structure our life chances and experiences. For Smith (1994:40), conversation is an everyday activity, yet it can be profoundly humanising, after Buber (1958, in Smith, 2000, 2009), and also 'deeply political' (Smith, 1994:43) after Freire (1972:61):

> To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*. [...] Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. [italics original].

Jeffs and Smith (2005:23) draw a distinction between informal education, based around conversation and formal education, based around curriculum, exploring different approaches to curriculum and their consonance or not with informal education (*ibid*:72-82).

As a process, Smith (1994:78) suggests the way 'direction' is conceptualised in informal education '*is some distance'* from curriculum models that focus on behavioural objectives or ones that seek to transmit a body of knowledge-content. Traditional product-oriented formulations of curriculum are problematic within the schema of a learning process led by conversation. If subject matter or learning outcomes are pre-defined, the opportunity for dialogue in the educational encounter is limited; and pre-defined outcomes undermine conversation's democratic values, as the 'learners' are frequently not involved in setting the learning outcomes or subject matter (Jeffs & Smith, 2005:73-76). They argue that '*it is the very absence of curriculum that is a key defining feature'* of informal education (*ibid*:81).

Fourthly, informal education involves learning in, about and through life, through exploring and enlarging people's experiences (Dewey, 1933). This infers a particular philosophy of education and learning: a disposition toward knowledge and knowledge generation, drawn from Aristotle's (2004:146) thinking around the practical disciplines, which posits knowledge not as a static body, but as a dynamic force created by humans in interaction with each other and the world (Seal & Frost, 2014:91 & 154); and the appreciation that the root and focus of learning is located in life experiences (Rousseau, 1993; Dewey, 1968, 1986; Freire, 1972; Rogers & Freiberg, 1993).

Dewey (1968, 1986) believed that *'[t]he only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's power by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself'* arguing therefore that all learning 'subject matter' should arise from everyday life. He suggested: '*Thinking begins in what may fairly enough be called a 'forked road' situation, a situation that is ambiguous, that presents a dilemma that proposes alternatives. […] The origin of thinking is some perplexity confusion or doubt'* (1986:122-123). Learning is then cultivated through reflection on these 'perplexing' or problematised lived experiences (Freire, 1972) – '*It is not sufficient simply to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting upon this experience it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost'* (Gibbs 1988:14).

Jeffs and Smith (2005:59-60) draw on the work of Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) to delineate three aspects of reflective learning:

- *Returning to experience* – recalling or detailing salient events;
- *Attending to (or connecting with) feelings)* – using helpful feelings and removing or containing obstructive ones;

- *Evaluating Experience* – re-examining experience in the light of one's aims and knowledge. It also entails integrating this new knowledge into one's conceptual framework.

It is from this reflection that learners actively construct their own experiences, making sense of them and attaching their own meaning to events (Boud, Cohen & Walker (eds), 1993). Informal education then is not about learning facts and information as ends in themselves, but about equipping people with wisdom for living – Aristotle's *phronesis* – so they can navigate life wisely and virtuously (Young 2006). This often requires us to struggle to make explicit what we have previously only known 'tacitly' (Polanyi, 1967), so that we might uncover what we know and how we have come to know it, in order to learn from it or to 'unlearn' it. This is particularly true of our learning about ourselves, uncovering those attitudes, behaviours and motives that lie in our 'blind spots' using tools such as the 'Johari window' as a starting point for this work (Luft & Ingham, 1955; Batsleer, 2008:38-44).

Fifthly, Jeffs' and Smith's contention that informal education can take place in any setting reminds us that the praxis of informal education is located within the practitioner, or more accurately, the relationships an informal educator is able to establish with others, rather than being bound by or located within an institution or profession. Dewey (1916:16) reminds us of the importance of paying attention to the environment in which we are working:

> We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit chance to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference.

Jeffs and Smith (1990a) argue elsewhere that the principles and practices of informal education transcend the standard professional boundaries of various welfare practices and traditions, such as teaching, youth work and social work, and can be practised within many professions. However, it is worth noting that although they argue informal education can take place in any setting, I would like to qualify this by saying 'any setting *where free-flowing conversation can be nurtured'.* Key to informal education is the freedom of the participants to negotiate and '*go with the flow*' of conversations without undue external influence (Jeffs & Smith, 2005:33-34). Jeffs and Smith encourage educators to be willing to be led by the unpredictable twists and turns of conversation, rather than trying to inappropriately influence its direction. However, the setting in which conversations happen can often have an unrecognised influence on the conversations themselves, whether this be on the streets,

in school or in prison. There may be both institutional or cultural factors which constrain conversation or limit participants' expectations of what is possible or appropriate, or the extent to which they are willing to engage unguardedly; and there may be other actors, external to the conversation that seek to directly influence the content of it or curtail it. In each of these situations, it takes the skill of the worker to carefully and patiently nurture a 'relational' environment where these factors can be recognised, acknowledged and overcome and where participants and workers can engage in unfettered conversation. It would be hard to imagine informal education flourishing in a setting where conversation was monitored and deliberately restricted.

Finally, Jeffs' and Smith's assertion that informal education is '*a*' way of helping people to learn affirms their valuing of other, more formal educative endeavours alongside the informal (2005:22-24).

3.2.2 Early examples of the practice of informal education

Many of the practices now referred to as informal education have existed '*as long as people have grouped together*' (Smith, 1997, 2009), pre-dating Smith's (1988) adoption and promotion of the term. In developing and theorising the concept, Jeffs and Smith built on '*the histories of adjacent areas of practice [...] notably youth work, adult education and play work*' (Jeffs, 2001: 34). Following these threads it is possible to construct a 'bricolage' of the practices, approaches and theories which make up contemporary informal education and to trace the development of the current conception and use of the term within youth work.

The story of informal education as a community practice can be traced back to the specialist educators of ancient Greece and the philosophies of Socrates, Plato (2007) and Aristotle (Smith, 1997, 2009). It takes in: popular education in the UK dating back to missionaries in the 1300's; debating in coffee houses; the eighteenth and nineteenth century philanthropic initiatives, such as the Sunday School and Ragged Schools movements, leading to national youth movements such as the YMCA, Scouts and Girls Clubs; adult schools for the 'working man'; museums, libraries and art galleries; and the development of educational and play theory by educators such as Rousseau (1993), Pestalozzi (1894), Fröbel (1908), Montessori (1912) and Dewey (1916; 1933; 1938), a key figure in offering supporting educational theory from which informal education draws. Dewey leads to twentieth century thinkers and adult educators, such as Rogers (Rogers & Freiberg, 1993), Lindeman (1926), Freire (1972) and Illich (1973). Educational practices in progressive schools, such as those employed by AS Neill

(1968), were influential in the development of informal education thinking and practice; as was the development of group work, contributing notions of association and democratic working processes; and community organisers and social/ political activists, such as Tawney (1966), Gramsci (1971), Alinsky (1989) and hooks (1994; 2003).

Much of the writing around adult education and life-long learning captured many of the qualities of current conceptions of informal education, from thinkers such as Lindeman (1926), Yeaxlee (1929) and Layton (ed) (1940). In *Informal Adult Education*, Malcolm Knowles (1950) offered a much more programmed version of informal adult education, which he continued to develop largely in relation to work-based learning (1980; 1984; 1989), forming the foundation for a distinctive area of literature related to informal learning in the workplace, as already briefly mentioned.

The development of the post-war national Youth Service (Jeffs, 1979) occasioned the first (known) full-length exploration of 'informal education' with young people, *Informal Education, Adventures and Reflections* by Josephine Macalister Brew (1946), credited with introducing the term 'informal education' into the youth work vocabulary (Smith, 1988; 1997, 2009; Stanton, 2015). Her working processes very much pre-figure those described by Jeffs and Smith. She advocated an approach that can be summarised as follows:
Informal education;

- starts where young people are, with what they are interested in, arising from everyday situations;
- is flexible and responsive to the present level of interest, preferring short, immediate educational interludes which develop organically, rather than longer, pre-programmed courses;
- is engaging and entertaining;
- attends to feelings and emotion;
- pays attention to environment; and which
- values and utilises the 'ordinary' language and culture of participants.

Between Macalister Brew's treatment and Smith's revival in 1988, 'informal education' was sporadically referenced in youth work literature, although very much in passing, and often (as in the first two quotations below), eliding 'social' and 'informal' education, which Smith (1988:124) argues is unhelpful, for example:

- [the youth service] *provides for the continued social and informal education of young people in terms most likely to bring them to maturity, those of responsible personal choice*' (HMSO, 1960:103 referenced in Smith, 1988:124);

- [work with the unattached requires….] '*using the tools and techniques of informal education. The method might best be described as social education'*. (Goetschius & Tash, 1967:134 referenced in Smith, 1988:124);
- '*Our informal education techniques have been carried into schools and are being used by the teacher* …' (Rowe, 1961, in Nicholls, 1997:18);
- [youth work is the provision of opportunities for] '*informal education, social intercourse and the creative use of leisure through membership of a group*' (Hall, 1965:264 in Jeffs & Smith, 1988:4).

Much of the practice Macalister Brew described in *Informal Education* was later developed by Davies and Gibson *(1967)* in *The Social Education of the Adolescent.* They conceptualised the aim of social education as *'the maturity of the next generation for their society' (ibid:86),* and the practice as person-centred and process-led, drawing on the personality of the worker and the context of the work.

> The adult who is engaged in social education cannot be forearmed in the sense of having instruction given to him in advance of a situation, such that he can say 'when I get to that point, I shall do so-and-so'. But he can be given, instead, the means of gauging for himself what to do at each future moment […and] to develop the personal equipment to diagnose and prescribe at the time what he ought to do. (*ibid*:148)

Davies (1981) argues for the robust theorisation of social education: to guard against the colonisation of youth work by policy makers, who sought to use it as a 'value-less and apolitical' practice to uncritically deal with society's concerns for young people. For him, social education is a value-based practice, which works with young people to help them critically assess and address their own needs. He outlined the crucial features of social education as follows:

- setting aims for practice which arise from a concern for, and appreciation of, the young person as a person;
- starting where young people are and working as close as possible to their own social networks;
- giving major attention to their view of the world and their accounts of what is relevant to their growth;
- seeking a set of reciprocal relationships between young people and adult workers, as far as this is feasible within the structures and organisations where workers and young people meet;
- giving weight and attention to how young people feel, and to the **process** [bold in the original] of their experience – its social context – as well as to their intellectual and technical education;
- insisting that, within these experiences, critical and not merely conformist responses are legitimised and indeed positively promoted. (Davies, 1981)

It is this conception of the practice of youth work and its educational processes that Jeffs and Smith sought to further theorise.

3.2.3 Informal education: recent developments in UK youth work – Jeffs and Smith

So far, I have credited the re-introduction of the term and concept of informal education to Mark Smith and Tony Jeffs, and traced the diverse range of practices they have drawn on to develop their theory of informal education. I will now examine in more depth how their conception of informal education developed, and the various ways it has been taken up in youth work literature and practice in the UK.

In '***Youth Work***', Jeffs and Smith (1987:2) identified '*the absence of a unique youth work theory; one that unambiguously speaks to workers and utilises their insights: a theory that they can both contribute to and draw from*'. Through that edited collection and subsequent work, they set out to address this gap, systematically developing, re-working and promoting a theory of an informal mode of education, grounded in the processes and practices of youth work and informed by theory and practice drawn from education, community development and other allied practices; a theory which could underpin and inform the practice of youth work at its most informal, spontaneous and conversational. This was the beginning of their development of 'informal education'.

Smith's (1980, 1982; 1981) earliest writings on youth work referenced and drew on the then current language of 'social education' as the descriptor of both the purpose and method of youth work, building on and developing concepts described in The Albemarle Report (HMSO, 1960), Goetschius & Tash (1967), Davies and Gibson (1967), Milson (1970), Leighton (1972), Davies (1976; 1981) and others. Through it, he sought both to 'rediscover' (1980, 1982) and 'redefine' (1981) social education. Although Smith does not reference informal education, his writing foreshadows his later thinking, evidenced through his emphasis on: education as the primary purpose of youth work; on paying attention to the process of youth work as a rich source of learning for young people (rather than focussing exclusively on the 'product' of youth work); and on critical engagement with everyday situations, again as the material for learning.

The publication of ***Developing Youth Work: Informal Education, Mutual Aid and Popular Practice*** (Smith, 1988) marked a significant development in Smith's thinking and saw the re-

introduction of the term 'informal education'. In this work, Smith (1988:ix) set out to '*construct a coherent and distinctive understanding of youth work'*, although he acknowledged that it was still, at that stage, a 'work-in-progress'. After tracing the history of popular work with young people and describing the various traditions which contributed to youth work's development, he examined the notion of social education (*ibid*:88-105), outlining his concerns with the lack of robust and critical theories supporting it, citing in particular:

- social education's then conception of 'youth' as a 'problem to be traversed', resulting, he argued, in paternalistic work which fostered dependency;
- a lack of attention to the political nature of practice, due to a focus on the individual and small group, '*rooted in the personal, without reference to the broader forces that help structure life chances and experiences'* (1988:98); and
- a Western, individualistic (and also sexist) view of the self and relations with others (eg. family, community), which informed the contemporary discussion and practice of social education.

He believed 'social education' was used in a loose way to embrace practices that could in no way be seen as educational; and was unhelpfully associated with specific groups of young people engaging in 'high risk' or 'low status' activities eg. sex/peace/political education or short courses on life skills for the 'less able' respectively, associations which he found troublesome and marginalising. In his view social education was a poorly defined descriptor for the purpose, content and processes of youth work. Any 'subject matter' could potentially contribute to the development of the self, thereby rendering the term 'social' redundant as a useful label of content and purpose. Neither did the combination of 'social' and 'education' delineate specific or unique educational practices utilised by practitioners, who instead drew on an amalgam of approaches used in many other settings, eg. group work, experiential learning, schooling. Consequently, Smith believed the term 'social education' was lacking as a '*rationale and 'method' in work with young people*', and should therefore '*be abandoned as a way of conceptualising the aims and methods of youth work*' (1988:xii).

From here, Smith sought to establish the purpose and method of youth work from first principles. He introduced Aristotle's idea of 'the good life' – *eudaimonia* – as its most fitting purpose, '*to enable individuals to pursue autonomously their own well-being'* (*ibid*:xii & 112) whilst also seeking the well-being of the wider community (*ibid*:112-115), thus, in his view, reconciling '*person-centredness with broader political and moral aims*'. He then asserted the need to '*reassess and rehabilitate the notion of informal education*' (*ibid*:124), outlining his

conception of informal education as a distinctive educational method, (*ibid*:139), characterised by its particular orientation to seven 'elements', which he summarised as follows:

1. Informal education can take place in a variety of settings, many of which are used for other, non-educational, purposes.
2. The process is deliberate and purposeful in that the people concerned are seeking to acquire some knowledge, skills and/or attitudes. However, such purpose and intent may not always be marked by closely specified goals.
3. Timescales are likely to be highly variable and often structured by the dynamics of the particular institution(s) in which exchanges are set. Most of those institutions will not primarily be concerned with education.
4. Participation is voluntary and is often self-generated.
5. The process is dialogical and marked by mutual respect.
6. There will be an active appreciation of, and engagement with, the social systems through which participants operate, and the cultural forms they utilise.
7. It may use both experiential and assimilated information patterns of learning. (*ibid:*131-2)

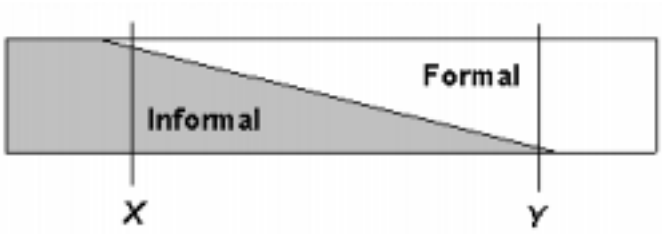
Central to informal education for Smith, was a concern to foster critical dialogue, involving listening, thinking and talking around an agreed theme, leading to informed and committed action; concepts largely informed by the work of Freire (1972) and Giroux (1983). Smith drew on the work of theorists such Dewey (1933), White (1982), Freire (1985), and Brookfield (1983) to support his thinking around educational process, and Stenhouse (1975) when thinking about the place of (or rather the inappropriateness of) a curriculum in informal education. He did not at this stage acknowledge Macalister Brew's (1946) earlier use of the term Informal Education, although she features in his history (*ibid:*35-47 *passim)*, and his conception of the practice strongly echoes her descriptions. This is something he makes more of in later work (1997, 2009; 2005:10).

Framed in the way he describes in *Developing Youth Work*, Smith believed *informal* education offered youth workers a helpful way of thinking about both method and purpose; and the capacity to fulfil the huge potential he saw youth work as having to promote individual and social / political change, which would foster individual and collective well-being.

In ***Using Informal Education: An alternative to casework, teaching and control?***, Jeffs and Smith (eds, 1990) made a significant proposition in line with Smith's earlier thinking: that the practice of informal education transcends the traditional boundaries of youth work and the welfare professions. As a mode of education (Stanton, 2015:97), they argued it could be used

with any age group, and that space could be made for this approach in diverse settings and disciplines. This claim was evidenced by chapter contributions from a vicar, a social worker and community probation worker, as well as youth and community workers and educators working in various settings. Each author examined how informal education could be practised and understood within their particular setting, highlighting and exploring central questions and issues that arose for them from practice. As an introduction to some of the issues raised, Jeffs and Smith (1990a) wrote in greater depth about the distinctive and complementary elements of formal and informal educational practices, proposing that they were not mutually exclusive – rather '*more akin to different traditions of thinking*' about education (*ibid:*13). They suggested that 'good' education would likely draw on both traditions and introduced the idea of temporary '*interludes*' of one practice within another, eg. informal education would inevitably involve 'interludes' of negotiated formal work and vice versa. Ellis (1990:94-97) expanded on this further in his chapter, describing informal and formal educational processes as lying on a continuum '*shading gradually into one another*', representing this in the following diagrammatic form (see Figure 1):

Figure 3.1 Education Practice Continuum – Informal to Formal



Ellis (*ibid*) considered that informal processes could communicate high-profile, accessible concepts well, but that communication would break down at the point the message became more complex. He identified the '*subtle blend of the formal and informal*', indicated by the area XY in Figure 3.1, as '*the solution to our difficulties*', but, as he acknowledged, this was largely unexplored territory, and he did not give any indication as to what this might look like in practice (*ibid:*96-97). Writers on informal, negotiated/non-formal and formal education/learning continue to refer to and draw on Ellis' continuum idea in their thinking (Smith, 1994; Ord, 2007; Zürcher, 2010), but without significantly exploring its meaning and outworking in practice.

In the same introductory chapter, Jeffs and Smith (1990a) identified various key elements essential to the dialogical encounter, particularly in relation to how workers might make

judgements about the content and direction of the work. They summarised these in a descriptive '*figure*' (their label), re-produced in Table 3 below. [The slightly unusual layout facilitated comparisons with more formal educators, developed in other work (see Smith 1994:79; 1996a, 2000)]. These elements are used as the basis for their final chapter, 'Educating informal educators'.

Table 3 : Elements of the Informal Education Process

Informal educators enter …
• *particular social and cultural situations*
with …
• *personal but shared ideas of the good* • *an ability to think critically and reflect-in-action* • *a disposition to choose the 'good' rather than the 'correct'* • *a repertoire of examples, images, understandings and actions and* • *an understanding of their identity and role.*
They encourage …
• *dialogue between, and with, people in the situation*
… out of which may come …
• *thinking and action.*
This affects …
• *those situations,* • *the individuals concerned,* • *significant others* • *and the educators themselves.*

(Jeffs & Smith, 1990a:19)

After this collection, Smith (1994) undertook a significant study of the practice of informal education, the results of which appeared in ***Local Education, community, conversation, praxis***. The term 'local education' was adopted to cover the practices of European and American educators, (who used terms such as *Sozialpadogogik*, *animation*, *non-formal education* and, in the UK, *informal education* (*ibid*:2)), indicating again the wider application of informal education processes to occupations beyond youth work. Using an approach to research which was grounded in practice, Smith placed practitioners' daily experiences at the heart of his theorising, giving them a voice central to the development of his theory. From these accounts, he generated new concepts (Jeffs & Smith, 1987:1-3), linking them to approaches from allied practices in order to re-work and develop theory to support his earlier conceptions of informal education. The change in terminology from 'dialogue' to

'conversation' (1994:30-31) is an example of the influence, upon his theorising, of workers' accounts of practice and the language they use, informed by theorists such as Goffman (1969), Rogers (1993), Gumperz (1982), Freire (1985), Wardhaugh (1985) and Burbules (1993), whose work covers a variety of forms of dialogue and conversation. Using practitioners' terminology, Smith examined:

- how place and locality, local knowledge and conversation shaped their work;
- the centrality of conversation to practice;
- how workers thought of themselves as educators, how they made judgements through reflection-in-action about what work to pursue and how to organise and structure their 'daily' work;
- how role, purpose, direction, issues/strategy, agenda and tactics formed practitioners' language and thinking about everyday practice, and how these concepts were embedded in practice; and
- how all this came together to form a *praxis*, leading to informed and committed action which made for human well-being.

Local Education is a robust and highly theorised account of the practice of informal education and the principles and processes which underpin it, informed by the work of thinkers such as Dewey (1933), Freire (1972), Schön (1983, 1991), Kolb (1984) and many others, in addition to those listed above. Smith followed it with the publication (co-authored with Jeffs) of ***Informal education: conversation, democracy and learning*** (1996, with new editions in 1999 & 2005), described by Smith (1999, 2002) on the 'infed' website as 'a replacement for *Creators not Consumers'*. This book has become a standard basic text for informal educators. It covers many of the concepts presented in *Local Education* in a more approachable way – for example; conversation, what it means to be an educator, working with process, curriculum, reflection and learning, structuring work – as well as emphasising newer issues, including chapters focussing explicitly on 'fostering democracy' and 'living with values', and a chapter on evaluating practice.

These four works cover Jeffs' and Smith's initial development and promotion of the principles and practice of informal education, both within and beyond youth work. They have since written, edited or collaborated on many other books, collections and journal articles, which examine youth work practice and more recently youth policy (Jeffs and Smith 2008; (eds) 2010) and they continue to be significant voices in the field of youth work. The

next section maps how others have taken up, written about, treated and developed informal education within the arena of youth work.

3.2.4 How others have taken up, worked with and developed informal education

From Smith's initial outline of informal education in *Developing Youth Work* (1988), the term gradually gained traction as a descriptor of the methods/processes/ practices of youth work. This is particularly so in two arenas: youth work as a specialist occupation – '*carried out by people who are qualified as youth workers or who consciously adopt the identity of 'youth worker''* (Banks, 2010:4-5); and youth work as a discipline – '*a body of theory and practice that can be taught, learnt and studied'* (*ibid*). This can be seen in the proliferation of books on youth work's history and practice, many published since youth work 'graduated' from a diploma-level discipline to a degree-level discipline in 2010.

However, 'informal education' is by no means a term about which there is uniform agreement. It is often used broadly and some would argue indiscriminately (Smith, 2001) to describe a wide variety of practices, some of which appear to bear little resemblance to Jeffs' and Smith's notions. It is a complex, occasionally contentious and sometimes contested concept (Jeffs & Smith, 2010:168; Belton, 2009; Ord, 2007), and is rarely described or defined succinctly with any uniformity, like youth work itself (de St Croix, 2016:4). At times informal education is the acknowledged heart of the youth work endeavour; at others it is barely referenced, even when the practice being described is coterminous with informal education. It can be unhelpfully conflated with incidental learning in everyday settings; and also used to describe programmed courses delivered using more 'laid-back' approaches. It can be viewed, on the one hand, simply as a set of value-less and apolitical techniques to be employed with young people for any personal, social or political end (possibly pre-determined by those outside the practice); and on the other, it can be treated as a '*praxis*' with internal integrity, the purpose of which is negotiated by those engaged in the local practice, leading to informed and committed action, promoting social justice and human well-being. To begin, I will map those writers who frame youth work as a practice of informal education, whether or not they reference informal education.

Informal Education and Youth Work Processes: 'Po-tay-to', 'po-tah-to'?

In their large-scale evaluation of the impact of UK youth services for the DfES, Merton (2004:5) asserted: '*There is widespread consensus that youth work's core purpose is the*

personal and social development of young people, provided through informal education.' Youth work is often framed as a practice of informal education, simultaneously acknowledging the central role informal educational processes play in the practice of youth work, whilst also, when appropriate, drawing on other, more formal educational modes (Deer Richardson & Wolfe (eds), 2001; Stanton, 2004; Batsleer, 2008, 2013a; Banks, 2010; Forrest, 2010; Green, 2010; Cartwright, 2012; Davies, 2012; Jones, 2012; Sapin, 2013; Mills & Kraftl, 2014; Bright, 2015; Pimlott, 2015; Wood, Westwood & Thompson, 2015). Different elements of informal education may be foregrounded (or omitted) in each treatment (if, in fact, what is meant by the term is explicated). Wood and Hine (2009:10) describe informal education as: '*[having] an emphasis on voluntary association, starting from where the learner is at, and encouraging them to reflect on their own experiences (Jeffs & Smith, 2005) in order to engage in a process of moral philosophy (Young, 2006)*' yet do not mention conversation as the central educational medium. Mills and Kraftl (2014:2-3) identify three features of informal education: 1) a process that flows from the everyday concerns of young people (Falk et al, 2009), which takes place where young people choose to be; 2) it relies heavily on dialogue and conversation to promote reflection on and learning from life, and change; and 3) it involves some kind of (sometimes weakly) political edge, which begins with consciousness-raising (*conscientização*) about one's own immediate situation, after Paulo Freire.

However not everyone who frames youth work in this way specifically references informal education. Despite being cited as '*the most influential English language writer concerning informal education with young people since [Macalister] Brew'* by Smith (1997), Bernard Davies does not take up the term informal education when writing about youth work, except for the briefest of mentions (2010:15 and 2015:106). As the term 'social education' fell out of vogue, Davies simply referred to 'youth work' (Davies, 1996; 2010; 2015), an '*unashamedly* [...] *educational practice*' (1996,:26). His seminal 'Youth Work: A Manifesto for Our Times' (2005, revisited in 2015), developed his earlier '*crucial features of social education*' (1981:11), via the '*distinctives*' of youth work (1996:27), into '*defining characteristics*' of the methods and process of youth work (2005, 2015); describing a practice consonant with Jeffs' and Smith's characterisation of informal education.

Davies' 'Manifesto' has exerted a significant influence on thinking and writing about youth work practice, and its framing of 'professional values'. He again posits youth work as '*a value-based educational endeavour' (2005:4):*

> explicit about its duty of care for individuals; committed to their greater self-realisation; concerned to help maximise their potential contribution to the greater good.

These aims strongly echo those of informal education: informal education is primarily about purposeful and committed education (Jeffs & Smith, 2005:13-19), it is informed by certain values (*ibid*:20-21 & 94-107) and it seeks the common good (Smith, 1994:165-6). Davies (2015:110-115, *passim*) emphasises that youth work is a process in which young people engage voluntarily (*ibid*:101-102; Smith, 1988:129; Jeffs & Smith, 2005:72-83). This characteristic forces youth workers to confront questions of power within and beyond the youth work relationship (Davies, 2015:103; Smith, 1994:44). Davies (2015:105) talks of the educational enterprise '*aiming at internalised ('owned') and transferable learning'*, which '*attend[s] to, indeed, positively affirm[s] the meaning and value of current experience for young people themselves'* (2005:13; 2015:107), requiring '*sensitivity to and prioritising of what and how young people feel – about themselves, about others, about their wider world'* (2015:112), all strongly indicative of informal education (Jeffs & Smith, 2005:58-71). Davies also posits practitioners' engagement and work with young people's peer networks and wider community and cultural identities as distinctive to the youth work process (2015:106-110), much as Smith does (1994:108-127) and argues that '*a key youth work rationale is to provide secure arenas for young people to risk more critical and creative responses*' (Davies, 2015:111), akin to Smith's writing in the final chapter of Creators not Consumers (1982:51-54). There is much overlap between what Davies proposes as distinctive to youth work and what Jeffs and Smith propose as the principles and practices of informal education, perhaps not surprisingly as Smith acknowledges his debt to Davies' work.

There are however, some minor variants, suggesting that Davies' 'youth work' and Jeffs and Smith's 'informal education' are not entirely congruent. For Jeffs and Smith (2005), conversation is both the medium and driving force of the educational encounter, a significant defining feature of informal educational practice, whereas in Davies' writing, conversation is not specified as one of youth work's distinctive features. Rather than referenced or discussed overtly, conversation is implicit, the *de facto* medium through which Davies' educational encounters proceed, as in his discussion of the "*hidden curriculum' – including those interpersonal exchanges between teacher and student which can have such an impact on motivation and learning*' (2015:102). When asking questions about what activity and territory will best mediate contact with young people, Davies enquires: '*Where will an appropriate youth work intervention fit on an informal-formal continuum of activity and*

structure?' (2015:114), suggesting that in his schema of youth work, informal education mediated through conversation is one kind of intervention, used alongside other informal and more formal activities, rather than the primary mode of encounter, as it is for Jeffs and Smith. Although they acknowledge the need for more formal 'episodes' in work – '[w]*e may work informally in one situation, formally in another. How we approach matters would depend on what is involved and appropriate'* – they qualify this by arguing that the work of an *informal* educator would return to and be predominantly characterised by conversation (2005:81-82).

Although the principles and practices Jeffs and Smith use to describe informal education are present and utilised within Davies' notion of youth work, they are not explicitly referred to as 'informal education'. It is possible to surmise from Davies' characterisation of youth work that he considers informal education one important approach within a range of consonant educational approaches (rather than the predominant approach), designed to support young people's learning.

Davies' lack of reference to informal education as a practice within or complementary to his conception of youth work arguably says something about how widely and consistently the concept of informal education has (or has not) been taken up by other youth work thinkers and writers. His Manifesto is an often referred to piece of youth work literature (Young, 2006:2; Sapin, 2013:13; de St Croix, 2016:82), which has sought to define and defend the occupation of youth work as a distinctive educational practice. Davies perhaps opts to promote the term 'youth work' instead of 'informal education', in order not to dilute the message and promotion of a practice with young people about which he is passionate. This is in line with his activism as part of the 'In Defence of Youth Work' Campaign, along with Tony Taylor and others, who have sought to 'defend' youth work as a distinctive practice in an era where government policy has sought to colonise youth work's practices for the purposes of social control (de St Croix, 2009) to make productive and economically viable units of young people; whilst also constraining its process-led approach, contingent on the worker's interaction with the young person, through a culture of performativity (Ball, 2003), '*compelled and incited by systems of control and comparison*' (de St Croix, 2016:84). Tony Taylor's (2009) open letter, published on the In Defence of Youth Work website, called for the re-affirmation of youth work as an 'emancipatory and democratic' practice, with cornerstones including: the sanctity of the voluntary principle; a commitment to conversation; the importance of association; valuing and attending to the 'here and now' of

young people's experience; an insistence on a democratic practice; a recognition that issues of class, gender, race, sexuality and disability shape young people's individual and collective experiences; and the essential significance of the youth worker. Taylor's description of 'emancipatory' youth work is a well-crafted summary of practices that are entirely consonant with the processes of informal education, but again, without referencing informal education itself.

Kerry Young also writes about youth work in a very similar way. In her exposition of '*The Art of Youth Work'* (2006:3), she describes youth work as '*an exercise in moral philosophy'*, unpacking this description of youth work's nature and practice in ways congruent with Jeffs' and Smith's informal educational practice, but without describing it as such. Young draws directly on Jeffs' and Smith's work (2005) and on much of the thinking to which they refer, for example Aristotle (2004), Macalister Brew (1943), Gramsci (1971) and Freire (1972), in presenting what are for her, the key practices and underpinning values of youth work: learning from experience and critical thinking (Young, 2006:79-81); conversation and dialogue (*ibid:*81-87); meaning-making (*ibid:*87-89); reflective practice (*ibid:*96-97); disposition towards virtue and practical wisdom (*ibid*:47-59); values of respect, reciprocity, honesty, trust and accepting young people (*ibid*:64-68). She concludes by defining the core purpose of youth work as '*to engage young people in moral philosophising through which they make sense of themselves, their experiences and the world*' (*ibid*:109). These aims and practices are entirely consistent with the Jeffs' and Smith's 'informal education'.

The above examples show a consistent representation of the principles and practices of youth work as a specialist occupation and as a discipline, (Banks, 2010:5), largely undertaken by trained and qualified youth workers. They prescribe youth work primarily as a practice of informal education as Jeffs and Smith conceive it, whether that term is referenced or not.

Informal Education Misunderstood: Value-less Methods, 'Relaxed' Course and Accidental Learning

However, informal education is not treated consistently in the literature. There are three commonly arising misconceptions: it is sometimes viewed simply as a method, technique or function within the larger practice of work with young people; it is framed in ways antithetical to dialogical practice, as pre-designed courses; and it is misunderstood as incidental *learning*. In addition, there are some who seek to dismiss it entirely as a patronising version of the radical practice of youth work.

Informal education draws on a mix of approaches, arising out of conversational encounters, to form a coherent educational practice that has integrity with its value-base. Sometimes these methods are 'cherry-picked' and utilised in isolation from the rest of the practice, whilst still being (unhelpfully) labelled 'informal education'. Sapin (2013:9) suggests that informal education is one of a number of terms used to describe the particular emphasis of the *role* of a youth worker, which infers workers might engage in 'a bit of' informal education with young people before moving on to perform another role with them. She likens informal educators to '*animators*' and '*arts development workers*', who '*work with young people to develop their self-expression through art, drama, poetry or music'*. Although she describes the aim of youth work as 'liberational' in the tradition of Nyerere (1976) (*ibid*:2), informal education is conceived of differently. In her glossary of terms (*ibid*:243), she portrays the work or role of an informal educator as:

> Pass[ing] on information and skills so that others develop and learn to make positive and informed choices in a responsive rather than curriculum-based approach.

In this rendition of the role of an informal educator, Sapin reduces the *practice* of informal education to discreet functions within youth work: methods or techniques to be drawn upon within the broader context of the value-based practice of youth work, but without having a practice-base and set of commitments of its own. These methods may operate as *elements* within the process of Jeff's and Smith's 'informal education', yet, on their own, they cannot accurately reflect the fullness of the practice as they conceived it. In this instance, Sapin focuses on the 'delivery of information' to young people, rather than the fostering of learning through conversation, reflection on and critical engagement with that information and young people's wider experiences, informed by particular values. The 'methods' of informal education then become a series of disconnected actions, divorced from any value-base and philosophical commitments and which, in theory, can be used for any end. Shane Meadows' film 'This is England' (2006) illustrates this well. The potent mix of embedded relationships, informal conversational, associational practices and learning episodes in group meetings and rallies are used to terrible effect to 'informally educate' 12-year-old Shaun into the thinking and practice of the National Front. For Jeffs and Smith, this may have the *appearance* of informal education through the use of similar approaches, but it can never be a true embodiment of the *praxis* of informal education, or, in fact any educational practice.

> For something to be called 'education', whether it takes place in the classroom, or the canteen, it must be informed by certain values. There is a dividing line between education and indoctrination. (Jeffs & Smith, 2005:20)

For Jeffs and Smith (*ibid*:95), these values include at their core: respect for persons; the promotion of well-being – welfare for all; the search for truth; democracy; and fairness and equality.

A second common misconception of informal education within practice settings and literature is to reduce informal education from a conversational practice to an activity – a flexible version of a formal educational intervention, such as a pre-programmed 'informal course', run in a relaxed setting or in less formal ways than in school. In a practice example for case-study discussion, Beck and Purcell (2010:112) describe a (fictional?) weekly young women's group:

> They have been undertaking traditional youth work activity such as group-building games, guest speakers and social trips to McDonalds, ten-pin bowling and so on. Previously they have received 'off-the-shelf' informal education packages from the youth work team. Usually these packages run for six sessions and have included first aid and healthy eating.

Here, the term 'informal education' is used to refer to 'packages' of structured courses, produced by someone outside the immediate youth work relationship, with a curriculum which has been designed with primary reference to the subject matter and the supposed 'generic' needs and abilities of young people, and without reference to the immediate participants. Although those 'leading' the activity may choose to 'allow' space for conversational interludes, the encounter is not driven by in-the-moment conversation, but by the pre-determined learning curriculum, and the encounter is directed by the worker. I have come across this use of the term frequently in my role as a youth work practitioner and through my experience as a field work tutor and teacher with qualifying youth work students: for example a worker for the Prince's Trust using the term 'informal education' to refer to the part pre-designed, part negotiated courses run with groups of young people recruited specifically for the duration of the course; and youth workers in church settings, who use the term 'informal education' to describe the programme of bible studies they procure (or self-design) to teach 'the bible' to young people. This understanding uses the term 'informal education' to relate to curriculum-driven learning outside of the formal school curriculum and which tends to focus on 'vocational' or life skills acquisition. This is

antithetical to Freire's educational dialogical practice (Seal & Frost, 2014:109) and, as such, it is a significant misconception of Jeffs' and Smith's informal education. Jeffs and Smith (2005:80-81) would label these types of courses / modes of education (Stanton, 2015) as:

- 'formal', if it has been completely designed by those outside the conversational relationship and imported wholesale; and
- non-formal, if there has been considerable negotiation with the participants around the subject matter, curriculum content and teaching strategy/modes of delivery ('non-formal' work using a negotiated curriculum).

In Jeffs' and Smith's schema, the use of a 'curriculum' – a clearly specified structured content and method – subverts the process of informal education, especially a curriculum applied widely without any contextualisation such as a 'national curriculum' or 'curriculum for youth work'. '*It is the very absence of curriculum that is a key defining feature' of informal education* (2005:81). John Ord (2004a; 2004b; 2007; 2008; 2012) took them to task over this position, arguing that informal education was internally inconsistent, had contradictory approaches to education, a laissez-faire approach to planning and did not offer an appropriately structured process for youth work. Surprisingly, he did this whilst advocating for a process-based, rather than an outcome-led, approach to curriculum in youth work: outlining a conception of youth work that seemed largely consonant with others' who would happily cast youth work as a practice of informal education. Despite what appeared to be similar process-led approaches, Ord misrepresented Jeffs and Smith's explanations and examples of informal education, to create what appeared to be a caricature of elements of the practice, which he then dismissed.

Stanton (2004:71) interpreted Ord's lack of attention to informal education as a reflection of '*its diminishing significance in youth work'*, concerned that the rigorously theorised practice of informal education was being abandoned in favour of the ill-defined idea of 'process'; in an attempt to appease Government agendas and desires for control (led by outcomes) in order to receive public funding.

A third mistreatment of informal education lies at the other end of the 'curriculum' spectrum. It conflates informal education with informal *learning*, assuming learning and 'teaching'/education are the same processes and consequently does away with the role of the educator altogether. Informal learning can be understood as the learning that goes on in daily life: this may be intentional learning or unintentional, incidental learning, acquired

unconsciously through the course of our daily activities (Jeffs & Smith, 2005:7-9). In their contentious discussion of the Brathay Trust's theoretical framework for their 'youth development' practice, Stuart and Maynard (2015) conflated informal learning with informal education and youth work, leading them to disregard the theoretical bases of both (Stanton, 2015). They described informal education/learning as '*the skills acquired unintentionally through life and work experience [...] not acquired in a planned or deliberate manner*,' (*ibid*:236), framing informal learning as without organisation or structure, with no adult role in terms of teaching or facilitation, being entirely learner directed and with no evidence of achievement. On that basis they dismissed youth work (understood as a practice of accidental and incidental informal learning), regarding it as an inappropriate basis for educative work with young people. They did this despite having referenced Batsleer's (2008) excellent exposition of *Informal Learning in Youth Work*, which explored how youth workers as informal educators can work with young people and environments to foster learning, primarily through conversation, in the unpredictable and spontaneous settings in which youth work takes place. Stanton (2015:102) offered a robust critique of Stuart's and Maynard's 'theoretical confusion', clarifying '*Informal learning is the process people engage in. Informal education is the practice that has developed to facilitate that form of learning*'. Smith (1999, 2008) was clear that for him, education involves 'intention and commitment' and a clear sense of the values underpinning one's practice.

There are some who suggest aligning youth work with 'education' at all is highly problematic. In his two polemics against contemporary youth work, Brian Belton (2009; 2010) critiques youth work's association with education (including informal education) as making it uncritically complicit in enacting state agendas towards young people at the expense of being young people's ally. He writes;

> During contemporary times, informal education has attempted to step into this breach in the foundations of youth work. However, as one trawls through the writing relating to it, the shoals of 'shoulds' and 'musts' might cause anyone weaned on the custom and practice of youth work to despair. Traditionally youth workers devoted themselves to working with others to find pathways in life through taking chances and opportunities for themselves. Hence, from a very long list of precepts, telling youth workers to educate young people (who have not asked to be educated) while insisting, for instance, that we should '*make compassion the kernel*' of our work, all the time promoting a rather vague notion of democracy, is both prescriptive and confusing. (2009:vii) (brackets and *italics* in original).

The phrase '*making compassion the kernel'* is a reference to welfare worker, Buddhist and 'sceptical' psychotherapist David Brandon's (1990:6) assertion in 'Zen in the Art of Helping' that '*The real kernel of all our help, that which renders it effective, is compassion'*. This is quoted by Mark Smith and Heather Smith (2008:15) in *The Art of Helping Others.* It is not clear whether Belton is directly critiquing Mark Smith's more recent conceptions of informal education within a 'helping relationship' here or whether he is despairing at how others have taken up the concept, as he neither defines what he means by 'informal education', nor does he reference the sources to which he is referring. He clearly has a more radical and critical view of the purposes and practices of youth work, calling youth workers to '*abandon the badge of the informal educator and take up the torch of socialising knowledge and supporting the genuine politicisation of those who you work with.'* (2010:9). Having 'helped' the reader to '*see what you are professionally, more clearly'*, Belton (*ibid*) somewhat surprisingly suggests the solution to our situation is '*education, as Malcolm X might have it, 'by any means necessary"*. Belton's issue seems to be less with education (the enabling of learning) and more with education in the form of 'schooling', in particular the purposes for which it is used – state agendas for surveillance, conformity and compliance – and the uncritical way in which workers have adopted these agendas in an attempt to be professional. de St Croix (2009; 2010a; 2010b) echoes these concerns, particularly around surveillance, outlining how state agendas undermine youth work as Davies conceives it, and arguing for a practice of 'radical youth work'. The final section of this chapter follows this critique, exploring more fully how informal education has been taken up and developed with particular reference to its value commitments in relation to critical theories.

Developing Informal Education: Radical Practice

I have looked at how youth work is framed as a practice of informal education, whether or not the term itself is referenced; and have explored some common mistreatments of Jeffs' and Smith's conception of informal education: as a method which can be purposed for any ends; as informal pre-designed programmes; and as accidental learning with no role for an educator; and touched on some critiques of its practice as a tool used to implement state policies.

Government agendas for youth work have become more prescriptive and managerialist over the past two decades, seeking to utilise the practices and relationships inherent in youth work to solve the perceived 'problem' of youth – youth unemployment, youth anti-social behaviour, youth crime, youth violence, 'failure' within the education system and so on.

There has been a growing concern amongst youth workers and youth work educators that the principles, practices and value-base of youth work as a critical and emancipatory practice drawing from Freire (1972) – those very elements which, for many, make this form of work with young people 'youth work' – are being eroded (Jeffs & Smith, 2008; Taylor, 2009; Belton, 2009; 2010; de St Croix 2009, 2010a, 2010b). It was this concern that sparked: the *In Defence of Youth Work* Campaign; Davies' 2005 Manifesto; and a long, ongoing debate about whether elements of youth work / informal education can be de-contextualised and re-purposed into non-youth work settings and for purposes that ostensibly serve young people, but are more about meeting society's needs for young people to conform and perform. There are a number of writers and practitioners who have contrasted informal education and its all-encompassing liberal humanist aim of 'well-being', with more critical and emancipatory purposes, drawn from critical theory, and focusing on issues of oppression, social injustice and the experiences of the excluded. Janet Batsleer is arguably the foremost proponent of this endeavour. Her aim was '*not to undermine the breadth of vision of education […] (articulated by Mark Smith or Kerry Young in informal education) but to extend and deepen the vision in the name and voices of those historically excluded*' (2010:161).

In *Informal Learning in Youth Work,* Batsleer (2008) explores how the processes of informal education can support an overtly anti-oppressive youth work practice. She proposes youth work as a practice of informal education – '*I refer interchangeably to youth and community workers, youth workers and informal educators*' (2008:1) – locating conversation, relationships, 'voice' and learning at the heart of the youth work encounter:

> Youth and community work is about dialogue, about conversation. What do youth and community workers do? Listen and talk. Make relationships. Enable young people to come to voice. 'Conversation' conveys a sense of the mutual learning which the practice at its best enables. The roles of educator and learner are each present in informal education. (*ibid*:5)

Batsleer's casting of informal education and its practices here and elsewhere (2012; 2013a:55-78; 2013b) are consonant with Jeffs' and Smith's thinking: an educational practice, which takes place in many contexts, undertaken by committed practitioners, who may be known by many different professional designations, and for which conversation is the heart of practice (2008:1). She acknowledges her debt to Jeffs and Smith, seeking to build on their work, yet critiqued Smith's work for having '*distanced itself to some extent from the engagement with questions of power and oppression which characterised the understanding of*

informal education as it developed from the work of Paulo Freire in the 1970's' (2008:9). Batsleer acts as a 'critical friend' to informal education in her call and work to *'reconnect the account of conversation in informal education with the themes of power, conflict, inequality and difference*' and to '*engage in a closer analysis of power relationships as part of [our] practice'* (*ibid*:9). This book takes the reader progressively deeper into more complex and nuanced areas of conversation and relationship, exploring aspects of both rarely examined in youth work literature or practice; for example, reminding the reader of the importance of paying attention to the quality of silence in conversation, to discern whether its presence is as a result of being 'shut down', bullying, resentment, anger or despair – or whether it is evidence of a therapeutic solitude, solidarity, regeneration and deeper connectedness with self, others, nature and Spirit.

Batsleer explicitly situates conversations and relationships within the broader systems and structures within which they take place, drawing on a range of critical theories – critical race, feminist and queer theory – to do so. In *Youth Working with Girls and Women in Community Settings*, she (2013a:55-78) brings feminist pedagogies and perspectives to bear on the practices of informal education to illuminate and develop them. These accounts and others (eg. Forrest, 2010; Jeffs, 2013; Taylor, 2013) connect informal education to more radical purposes which seek to identify, examine, work against and overcome oppression and social injustice not only situated within relationships but within wider social and structural systems and narratives. As someone who worked out my own learning of the principles and practices of informal education with young people living (located) in highly 'deprived' inner-city neighbourhoods, whose voices and experiences have been consistently ignored, denied, demonised and dehumanised, this is how I intuitively framed Jeffs' and Smiths' work. It is this account of informal education as radical praxis that most strongly resonates with me and which I seek to embody in my own youth work practice and 'foster' in the students I work with. And it is this framing of informal education that has informed my approach to curriculum development, explored in the next chapter.

Alongside this more politicised conception of informal education, another strand of thinking and writing has recently emerged from the field of critical geography, focusing on space and location, drawing on Jeffs' and Smith's understanding of informal education as a practice which can take place in any setting. Whereas the forms of radical practice above specifically recognise the identity of the people with whom informal educators work, and the way identity impacts and shapes their life experiences and opportunities, this emerging body of

writing recognises that youth work/informal education operates in specific spaces and places – neighbourhoods, schools, on 'wilderness' camps, on the streets, in buildings, online – and it critically examines the geographies of informal education and learning (Cartwright, 2012; Davies, 2012; Kraftl et al, 2012). These pay particular attention to the spaces in which youth work, as a practice of informal education, takes and has taken place. This is a timely reminder of the impact of environment – place and space – on the work of informal educators. Although this work has not been picked up within the youth work literature, it has strong echoes with, and the potential to speak into, some recent debates about the non-traditional places in which youth work is now being performed – schools, hospitals, prisons, probation centres, the virtual world of social media; as well as sharpening our understanding of how the more 'traditional' neighbourhood, community and faith- based settings shape our understandings of and approach to work.

3.3 Conclusion

Informal education has been shown to simultaneously hold an accepted place as describing the educational processes of youth work, at the same as being a contested, a sometimes misunderstood and a misapplied set of principles and practices. Informal education is being challenged from both outside (Barrett, 2005) and within the profession (Payne, 2009), its core principles and practices are being broken up, significantly diluted and used indiscriminately as 'methods' (Beck & Purcell, 2010; Sapin, 2013) without reference to the whole praxis, as conceived by Jeffs and Smith (1990a; 1990b; 2005; 2010). Although youth work literature has increasingly referenced informal education, significant youth work writers neglect to acknowledge it by name, even when describing principles and practices that are congruent with the praxis. There are a few who argue for a more radically informed and purposeful praxis of informal education to address the challenging social inequalities which continue to exist in the UK and world-wide for many young people (Batsleer, 2008, Belton, 2009, Forrest, 2010; de St Croix, 2016). Interestingly, as the state has sought to re-purpose youth work practices in non-youth work contexts to deliver state agendas for young people, some are beginning to return to discussions of social education and social pedagogy as a way of distinguishing the discrete aims, processes and practices of youth work from those of schools within the new managerialist era (Batsleer, 2013b; Slovenko & Thompson, 2016).

In a recent article locating youth work and informal education as practices deriving from the same dialogical educational traditions, Jeffs (2017:13) reminded us of the counsel of Freire:

> the strategies of 'education', both formal and informal, can with equal facility serve the causes of 'oppression' as they can those of 'liberation'. For that reason, it is naïve, even self-delusory, to assume that there are say [sic] fixed 'youth work' or 'social work' values; values that are of themselves axiomatically liberatory.

Many in the youth work sector would agree that the practice of youth work as informal education has been in significant danger (if it has not already fallen foul) of being used for purposes contrary to the liberatory and critical values underpinning conceptions of youth work deriving from Freire. Jeffs (*ibid*:16) calls for '*a dynamic informal sector committed to social justice and equality, which operates in accordance with those values'*: those values being '*dialogue, conversation, critical analysis [...] trust, mutuality and interdependence'*, '*the essentials required to build democracy anew and foster meaningful citizenship'*. Jeffs (*ibid*) contends that these values and practices cannot be learned by rote or instruction, but must become a '*habit of the heart'*.

> This will require practitioners to undertake their own conversations regarding the value base, worth and role of educational interventions that occur beyond the confines of formal settings if we are to unearth fresh ways of generating what Mill (1929:757) called 'spontaneous education' and 'collective deliberation on questions of common interest. [...] The good news for those whose [sic] are skilled in the arts of conversation and who delight in fostering dialogue, whatever their professional title, is that they will discover a society that is as much in need of their talents now as it ever was. (*ibid*:20 & 21)

In this chapter I have sought to describe and delineate informal education and its treatment within youth work. This is the context in which I taught two modules (Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination and Informal Education) on a youth work degree course to qualifying youth work students. The next chapter explores the research design employed in this investigation and the rationale for my choices.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The introductory chapter explained how I came to the research through a broad, professional interest in how students develop their professional values during qualifying youth work education and how educators can effectively support students in this process. Chapters 2 and 3 explored the literature around developing values in professional education and the values, principles and practices of informal education that have significantly influenced how I have developed my teaching and learning strategies and approached this study.

This chapter explains the rationale underpinning my research choices. In it, I explore my reasons for choosing a practitioner research case study design, the development of my focal question, the choice of approach and methods for data collection and the opportunities, limitations and ethical issues inherent in case study practitioner research and how I managed these. As a visiting lecturer, improving my own teaching practice was a significant motivator for this investigation. This was one of the factors that prompted the decision to locate the site of the research within my own teaching classes, in keeping with research traditions in my professional field – education and youth work.

4.2 Practitioner Research in Education and Youth Work

This investigation is a case study of a group of students on a particular youth ministry course. However, it is also an example of practitioner research. As a visiting lecturer, using (according to students) some fairly unusual methods, I was eager to investigate further the experiences of students that I taught, in order to extend my own, the college's and the field's professional knowledge and practice. Practitioner research is frequently employed within the education, health and social care professions, increasingly so within the last thirty years, with the move towards 'evidence-based practice' within these fields. As a term, it is broadly applied to refer to a variety of research activities, carried out by practitioners for the purpose of advancing professional knowledge and practice (Armstrong, 2008; Fuller and Petch, 1995;

Campbell, 2007). Robson's (2002:534) description of a practitioner-researcher as '*someone who holds down a job in some particular area and is, at the same time, involved in carrying out systematic enquiry which is of relevance to the job*', allows for diversity in both research approach and site: the enquiry must be systematic but may employ a variety of paradigms, methodologies and strategies; the researcher may investigate their own practice, their wider place of work, or another site, relevant to their professional practice, but where they themselves are not a practitioner; and they may focus on investigating practice, through systematic reflection on cycles of research-informed action, or may investigate an aspect of professional knowledge relevant to the profession. Practitioner research affords practitioners the space to '*critically engage with debates from the field, policy and practice and link theory and practice*' (Cullen, Bradford and Green, 2012:9).

Within education, the profession to which youth work is most closely aligned and from which it draws much of its theoretical underpinning, practitioner research emanates from the 'teacher-as-researcher' movement, developed by Lawrence Stenhouse (1975) and promoted by John Elliott (1991) (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Murray & Lawrence, 2000; Pring, 2000). Stenhouse aimed to reduce the separation between educational research, at that point most often completed by academics, and the daily professional practice experiences of teachers (Punch 2009:40). He encouraged teachers to become researchers themselves, by systematically investigating the teaching and curriculum dilemmas they faced within their own schools or classrooms. This explains why the term 'practitioner research', particularly within education and youth work, is often assumed to refer to someone who is researching their own practice, as teacher-educator Marion Dadds' (1998:41) definition makes explicit:

> In its broadest sense, I take practitioner research to refer to forms of enquiry which people undertake in their own working contexts and, usually, on their own professional work, in whatever sphere they practice. The main purpose of the enquiry is to shed light on aspects of that work with a view to bringing about some benevolent change.

Consequently, the terms '*action research*', '*practitioner action research*', '*practitioner-based enquiry*' (Murray & Lawrence, 2000), '*curriculum research*' (McKernan 1996) and '*pedagogical action research*' (Norton 2009) are often used to describe research undertaken by a practitioner who is researching their own practice using an '*action research*' methodology: a practice- or action-led approach to research, utilising iterative cycles of action, reflection and research to explore practice/action and generate theory. Action research was first described

in this way by Kurt Lewin (1946) in relation to his community activism and social justice work, and developed within education by Elliott (1991), Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) and Somekh (2006). Campbell (2007) makes a similar point, suggesting that '*practitioner research is closely related to, and draws on, the methodologies of the "family of action research" described by Kemmis & McTaggart (2005:560)*', although she also acknowledges that it can and does draw on a variety of methods including case studies, ethnographies and narrative methods (Campbell, McNamara & Gilroy, 2004:80). Although many discussions of action research and practitioner research within education conflate the two terms without distinction (Pring 2000, Dadds & Hart 2001), action research need not be carried out by practitioners, and practitioner research need not be conducted using an action research methodology (Shaw 2005).

The distinction is pertinent to this investigation – a piece of practitioner research, sited within my own practice, but drawing on a longitudinal case study methodology to investigate students' experiences of developing their professional values. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:356) note the difficulties in distinguishing between 'action research' and 'case study', suggesting '*one has to be very cautious in making this distinction because there can be gross overlaps between the two*'. I want to echo this, particularly in relation to a piece of extended practitioner research, as this investigation is, and note two points here. The first is that, as I listened to what students were saying, in their research interviews, in class and through their journals, I reflected and regularly made small-scale changes, both to my practice and, in the case of the Informal Education module, to the curriculum and assessment processes, in order to improve my teaching and better support student learning. Had it not been for my doctoral investigation, I may have been unaware of some of these issues and therefore not made the practice-based changes that I did. However, although these changes could be regarded as 'action resulting from research', this is not the primary focus of this investigation.

Secondly, as I researched students' experiences, it was evident from their writings, communications and the research interviews, that both my actions as a teacher, and the person that I am, did, at times, have a notable impact (both positive and negative) on student's learning and their experience of the learning process. As an emerging theme from the data, this was another area of potential exploration, which I consider further in Section 4.3 below.

4.2.1 Practitioner research purpose

When considering undertaking a piece of practitioner research, Shaw (2005:1232) reminds us that, '*[i]t is not adequate to define practitioner research simply as research carried out by practitioners, without grounding it on a basis of purpose*'. He argues that a definition should offer an implicit criterion for assessing the quality of practitioner research. Despite the diversity of definitions, applications of the term and methodologies employed, many descriptions of practitioner research have a similar conception of its dual purpose '*to create and extend professional knowledge and associated understandings of professional practice*' Goodfellow (2005) (see also Dadds above). In discussing teacher practitioner research, Pring (2000:137) states '*..as in any research, that conducted by the teacher with a view to the improvement of practice should lead to a growth of knowledge, even if this is context bound, tentative, provisional and constantly open to improvement'*, suggesting all practitioner research should '*make a contribution to what we know and what we can do*' (Cullen, Bradford & Green, 2012:7). This investigation seeks to make a contribution to: what is known of how youth work students develop their professional values during qualifying education; and, through doing so, to contribute to knowledge about youth worker education by considering effective ways to support this process in qualifying educational practice. Personally, it affords me the opportunity to explore the extent to which my own practice enables students to develop their professional values, a powerful personal motivator for my doctoral studies, and consonant with a practitioner research investigation.

4.3 Developing a Research Focus: Focal and Subsidiary Questions

A significant part of the research process has involved me refining my broad interest in 'teaching professional values' into an appropriate doctoral focal question and research design, a process of '*becoming clearer about the intellectual puzzle, about what exactly it is [I] want to describe and explain, and about the more detailed questions [I] will need to address*' (Lewis, 2003:48). Having opted to locate the research within my own teaching practice, it was vital to clarify an appropriate focus, question, approach and method for the research, which enabled me to be clear about the focus of study within the whole unit of 'my teaching practice', and which framed the focal question in a way that gave focus and direction to the research and clarity to the logic of enquiry (Punch, 2009).

Early attempts at describing the focus of the study were loosely framed as an investigation into 'how qualifying youth work education supports students in their exploration and development of professional values'. Having chosen to locate the research site within my own practice, framing it as a piece of practitioner research, I drew on the strong link between practitioner research and action research methodologies, assuming I would employ an action research methodology to explore my own teaching practice, as one example of how youth work education could support students to develop their professional values. This chimed with one of the themes emerging from the data – that of my impact as teacher on students' learning and their experience of the learning process.

Reading in more depth around action research methodologies – particularly those of McNiff (2002) and Whitehead & McNiff (2006) – and subsequent discussions with colleagues about this approach enabled me to appreciate that locating myself as the centre of this investigation could prove problematic and unhelpful. This approach to research appealed to me as a reflective practitioner eager to improve my own practice, foregrounding, as it does, the experience, practice and understanding of the teacher in 'living out their educational values', with the potential to provide much data to explore the teacher experience of teaching values. However, it would have offered little opportunity to focus on exploring the students' perspective of developing their professional values, and this was the area of primary interest to me, gained from previous teaching and learning encounters with students. I was also concerned that exploring my impact on the students' learning journey might become indulgent and too self-referential and that I had not taken careful enough journal notes about my own experiences of class teaching to do this rigorously. On that basis, I decided not to pursue this avenue in this investigation. However, it is maybe an area of research to return to later, as I have very much appreciated and benefited from the accounts of practice by educators such as Stephen Brookfield (1986; 1995; 1998), bell hooks (1994; 2003) and Parker Palmer (1998) and their reflections and analysis of both their practice and their 'self' in practice. If, by researching and sharing my own experiences I could make a small contribution to this knowledge, I would be eager to do so.

Allwright (2005) challenges practitioner researchers to prioritise understanding (research) before action, arguing that much action research, designed as it is to 'solve problems and improve practice', focuses on the action of the practitioner without first gaining a full appreciation of the situation. He advocates that practitioner research should carefully research the issue or puzzle from many perspectives to develop an enhanced understanding

of the situation, rather than rushing to action in order to solve the problem, the nature of which might not yet be fully understood. In developing principles for practitioner research from his own practice, he writes: '*One of our first big realisations … was that we needed to bring understanding back to the foreground in our work, to insist that we were dealing with the notion of understanding, not problem-solving*' (2005:358). Armstrong (2008:450) echoes this in her dictionary definition, suggesting a practitioner researcher '*would reflect on the issues related to the situation rather than begin from a position of trying different strategies to 'fix' the problem. The idea is to arrive a greater understanding….*'.

This resonates with my professional interest to understand, as fully as is possible from one's own perspective, how youth work students develop their professional values; and then to apply this knowledge to explore my own teaching strategies, curriculum design and educational philosophy, before moving to the stage of devising and testing out revised or new strategies and curricula. This approach is consonant with my philosophy of teaching and learning as I currently understand it: where I value and prioritise the teacher / educator task of understanding what students are learning from the educational encounter, in order to better support their learning – akin to Schön's (1987) coaches and Brookfield's (1995) critically reflective teacher.

Initial analysis of early data gathered from the pilot study of student journals and the first set of interviews evidenced rich material to support exploration of the students' perspective of articulating and developing values. Two examples are offered below.

> *In my youth work I have realised the amount of power I have. I am representative of the youth and they treat me as guide, mentor and friend. I have a responsibility to them and to the other leaders. The work I do and the way I present myself have impact on the lives of my fellow leaders and youth. Power and responsibility are key, I must never abuse power but act responsible with it, ensuring I am using it to a positive means. However I do have to continually examine my motives, come from different perspectives and come to a informed decision. This decision should not be conveyed dogmatically either but conveyed in the most understanding and informative way. This is key; as my job as a Christian youth worker means I should be empowering others to take up leadership and responsibility. It would be easy to over-influence and similarly stand back (this balance is hard work).* ***Robert, Group A, Advocacy Learning Journal 5***

> *Yesterdays lecture was really really good for me as I have started to see the relevance of myself in relation to all the things that you ask us to talk about such as, in relation to the*

> *world, to my power, to other people etc. It is an eye opener for me because I have thought that talking about myself for 6 minutes a time to be completely pointless but I start to see that the way I view myself directly effects how I view other people and ultimately how I treat them.* ***Jake, Group A, Advocacy Learning Journal 5***

Further reading also suggested this would be a valuable area of research. Cooper (2007/8:63) argues the need to '*find more innovative ways of engaging students that encourages a far deeper approach to learning, one that enabled students to consciously and deliberately construct their realities*'. Young (2006:6), in emphasising the need for youth workers to develop '*the knowledge, skills and dispositions to engage with young people in the process of moral philosophising'*, charges youth worker education as follows:

> The training and development of youth workers therefore needs to provide them with opportunities for their own self-exploration, examination of their own values, development of their own critical skills and enlargement of their own capacity for moral philosophy.

However, very little research has been done on the student experience of qualifying youth worker education and training particularly in the area of value development, with Susan Cooper at the University of St Mark and St John in Plymouth, a notable exception to this. In support of a focus on student perspective, Cooper (2007/8:57) quotes Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000:178) to underline the importance of gaining students' perspectives of the teaching and learning process.

> Students may make entirely different interpretations of taught material than those intended by educators, or of course, educators may communicate entirely different messages from those they intend… and there may be contradictions between espoused messages of educators and implicit messages embedded in the context.

This doctoral investigation offers an extended opportunity to focus on, explore in depth, analyse, learn from and theorise the student experience of developing their professional values; and the possibility to use this enhanced understanding to posit teaching and learning strategies most suited to supporting this process, including an exploration of my own practice. As this opportunity would not normally be possible within the regular teaching cycle, I considered it would make a valid and profitable focus for this doctoral study.

The decision to make the student experience the centre of the investigation shifted the locus of my focal question from an action research exploration of my experience of teaching ('how qualifying youth work education supports students to develop their professional values') to a case study of the students' experience of developing their professional values, requiring me to re-frame the question thus:

> **How do youth work students develop their professional values during qualifying education?**

The focal question gave rise to a number of subsidiary questions:

1. what are the professional values of youth work?
2. what helps students to examine their own value positions and their professional value positions, to engage in a critical dialogue between the two and to assess the impact of each on their thinking- and action-in-practice?
3. what attributes and competencies are required to enable students to articulate, develop and implement professional values in practice and how are these attributes and competencies fostered in qualifying training?
4. how do students develop and 'own' their professional values in the formation of their professional identity?

This doctoral investigation, then, is framed as a practitioner research case study, seeking to make a contribution to '*professional knowledge and associated understandings of professional practice'* (Goodfellow 2005). The knowledge, understanding and learning generated from this investigation will be used to evaluate and improve my own teaching practice – my curriculum design, the teaching and learning strategies I employ and the 'I' who teaches (Palmer, 1998) – and, through sharing with the wider community of youth work training and education agencies, I hope to offer learning which can inform and develop our collective practice of enabling youth work students to develop their professional values in qualifying training.

4.4 Choosing an appropriate methodological approach

4.4.1 A qualitative interpretive approach

Blaikie (2000:38) argues, '*the approach to research has to match the requirements of the research questions posed*': consequently, the chosen research paradigm, approach and strategy for this investigation arises from the nature and demands of my focal question,

> **How do youth work students develop their professional values during qualifying education?**

'Values', as described in Chapter Two, can be understood as socially constructed and personally adopted concepts, which find meaning and significance through the way people interpret them, commit to them and enact them. Exploring the development of students' professional values required a strategy and paradigm that recognised and worked with the constructed and interpreted nature of values and students' individual experience, within the 'real world', natural setting of the classroom (Robson, 2002). A qualitative research strategy and methods, employed in a constructionist, interpretive paradigm, were most suited to this investigation.

Qualitative research is an inquiry approach that helps us '*understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible*' (Merriam, 1998:5). Merriam's (1998:6-8) list of characteristics of qualitative research almost entirely mirrors that of Bogdan and Biklen (1982:27-30). The two sets of characteristics have been combined below:

1. Qualitative research uses a natural setting as the direct source of data, usually involving fieldwork, where the researcher goes to observe people's behaviour and interaction in 'situ'
2. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis
3. Qualitative research is richly descriptive
4. Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products

5. Qualitative researchers tend to analyse their data inductively, they build concepts and theories more often than testing existing theory, research is often undertaken because of lack of theory
6. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. The key concern is understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspective, not the researcher's, and capturing this accurately.

A qualitative approach was clearly suited to the needs of this investigation, where:

- the data would be sourced from a natural setting
- I, as researcher, would be the primary instrument for data collection and analysis
- the investigation was concerned with process, how students develop their values over time
- the data would be treated primarily inductively, to see what themes emerged from the data
- the investigation sought to understand the meanings students attached to values, and their perspective on the process of value development, and in doing so, required rich description to explain and explore their experiences.

An interpretive theoretical perspective recognises that we each experience the world in a subjective way, resulting in the potential for each of us to come to differing understandings and meanings about the same object or phenomena. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:17) state that '*the central endeavour in an interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience*', and Bryman (2008:16) notes that an interpretive paradigm requires the researcher to '*grasp the subjective meaning of social action*'. An interpretive theoretical perspective offers an appropriate philosophical framework to explore and understand: students' particular experiences and understandings of articulating, developing and implementing their professional values; the meanings they attach to the values they espouse; and how these values inform their professional actions.

Interpretivism draws on a constructionist/ constructivist epistemology. Constructionism operates from the premise that we know the world through constructing truth and meaning as we engage with the world. Crotty (1998:79) suggests that the truth and meanings we construct to make sense of the world are, in the first instance, provided for us by our culture;

that we are taught and learn them in a complex and subtle process of enculturation; and that, unless we learn to critique them, they shape our thinking and behaviour throughout our lives. He distinguished between his *constructionist* epistemological stance – where the collective generation and transmission of meaning is acknowledged – with a *constructivist* stance – which focuses exclusively on the meaning-making of the individual mind (*ibid*:58). Although nuanced, Crotty's distinction is helpful in locating my epistemological stance within his *constructionist* paradigm: reflecting my understanding and approach to exploring the personal, yet enculturated, meanings students bring to professional training of their personal and professional values; and the impact these prior meanings have on their developing youth work practice and, in particular, on the development of their professional values. I found this distinction particularly helpful in relation to retaining a focus in my research (as I seek to in my teaching practice) on the critical / emancipatory spirit which is the foundation of much youth work, as embodied in the seminal work of Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (1972). Crotty (1998: 58) writes:

> Whatever the terminology, the distinction itself is an important one. Constructivism … suggests that each one's way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other, thereby tending to scotch any hint of a critical spirit. On the other hand, social constructionism emphasises the hold our culture has on us: it shapes the way in which we see things (even the way in which we feel things!) and gives us a quite definite view of the world. This shaping of our minds by culture is to be welcomed as what makes us human and endows us with the freedom we enjoy. For all that, there are social constructionists aplenty who recognise that it is limiting as well as liberating and warn that, while welcome, it must also be called into question. On these terms, it can be said that constructivism tends to resist the critical spirit, while constructionism tends to foster it.

Interestingly, the task of professional value development is, in part, a process of enculturation into a 'professional framework' and a community of practice (Wenger, 1998); at the same time, it aims to foster a critical stance encouraging practitioners to contribute to the ongoing development of this collective professional framework as part of the community of practice, as they reflect upon and consider its application within changing contexts. The focal question recognises the requirement that these professional values are 'shaped' and 'owned' by the practitioner as *their* professional values, which inform their own practice and that of the wider collective community. A constructionist position allows for these tensions to be recognised and explored through the research.

4.4.2 A longitudinal case study

The investigation required a methodology consonant with the qualitative, interpretive paradigm chosen, and which facilitated the collection of data that enabled study of the focal question. '*How do … students … develop…*' is fundamentally a question about *process* – about activity and change through time (Saldaña, 2003:8) – requiring the collection of rich, descriptive data in a variety of media in order to capture and explore change in students' thinking and practice. Sztompka (1993:41) argues that time is intimately related to social change: '*[i]t is impossible to conceive of time without reference to some change. And, vice versa, the idea of change apart from time is simply inconceivable'*. For him there are '*no timeless phenomena or events, either in the sense of location in time or in the sense of extension through time'* (*ibid*:42). Like Sztompka, Saldaña (2003:8) prefers to talk of change *through* time, arguing that the phrase 'change *over* time' implies that the research process is untouched by time, or time by the research process. Instead, he suggests it is more helpful to think of the research process as being woven through time and time woven through the research process, to reflect their inextricability. Time is not only a pre-requisite of change, but also of stability, '*since the latter is nothing but an awareness that something has remained stable whilst its surrounding environment, and even the components within, have changed'* (Adam, 1990:9). This is a helpful reminder to be open to the possibility that there may have been no observed change during the research process – that situations, phenomena, or in the case of this study, values and attitudes, remained the same – as well as to consider whether any change that has taken place has been embedded and remained stable through time (Saldaña, 2003:16).

Analysing change through time necessitates collection of data from more than one point in time, requiring a longitudinal design (Kelly & McGrath, 1988:135; Gorard, 2013:114). According to Flick (2014:128), in longitudinal research;

- an interesting process or state is analysed again at later times
- the same method of data collection is applied repeatedly in order to analyse how things have changed over time in the issue
- there should be enough time between the two points when data are collected.

Flick does not expand in detail on what constitutes 'enough' time. Saldaña (2003:4), for his part, recommends nine months as the minimum amount of time for a qualitative study to be considered longitudinal in an educational setting. He (*ibid*:16) proposes that '*we conduct a*

longitudinal study for two primary purposes: to capture through long-term immersion the depth and breadth of the participants' life experiences, and to capture participant change (if any) through long-term comparative observations of their perceptions and actions.' He also calls into question the usefulness of 'from-to' / 'before/after' longitudinal models, eg, *from* point-A (*kindergarten)*, *to* point-B (*second grade)* (*ibid*:7-8), suggesting such models can limit the researcher's ability to '*discern evolutionary processes*'. The focus on discrete start and end points may result in the researcher '*gloss[ing] over details and reduc[ing] assertions of change to descriptive statements of stark contrast'*. Again, Saldaña (*ibid*:7-8) advocates a '*from-through*' framework, which outlines a process of change that '*details the complexities of the journey*'. In this study, the data collection of journals took place with three cohorts of students, through a 4-year time period in 2008-2012. The interview data from the central cohort was collected in three stages through 23-months in 2010-11 (see Table 4 on page 102). As Flick (*ibid*) suggested (above), the same method of data collection was used for the journals and similarly for the three interviews with the central cohort of students, seeking to detail the '*complexities of their journey'* (Saldaña, *ibid*:7-8) in developing values. The reflective nature of the interviews – inviting participants to read and comment on their previous answers in subsequent interviews – gave participants a unique opportunity to reflect on, review and appraise their earlier statements, giving rise to some surprising and important reflections on their journey, echoing Saldaña's (*ibid*:34) concern that researchers give due attention to what participants themselves '*perceive as important or salient in their lives'*.

In asking about '*their* professional values', the focal question also enquired into the personal and differentiated meanings students attached to their understanding and implementation of professional values. This again required rich data to illustrate subtle differences: both between different students and within the same student over time. A case study approach is well suited to answering 'how' or 'why' questions about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control (Yin, 2009:3-10). Merriam's (1998:19) description of the function of a case study again endorses the selection of this design for my investigation:

> A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context, rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insight gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice and future research.

For a 'commonsense' definition of case study, Flyvbjerg (2013:169-170) refers readers to the Merriam Webster Dictionary (2013):

> case study: an intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment.

Further explicating the dictionary definition, Flyvbjerg (2013:170) notes four points:

1. that it is this choice to study an '*individual unit'* or 'bounded system' which marks out a study as a case study, rather than any particular methods or approaches. As Stake (2008:119) argues, a case study is '*a choice about what is to be studied. By whatever methods, we choose to study the case*.'
2. the '*intensive*' nature of case studies results in greater depth – richness, detail, completeness and variance – for the unit of study than do other forms of study;
3. case studies stress '*developmental factors*', exploring a string of linked events which evolve through time;
4. and case studies focus on '*relation to environment*', setting events in their context and exploring the relationship between them.

Drawing on Yin (1994) and Stake (1994), Punch (2009) adds:

5. usually there is an explicit attempt to preserve the wholeness, unity and integrity of the case;
6. multiple sources of data and multiple data collection methods are very likely to be used in case studies, to enrich the detail provided and analysed.

This investigation involves intensive study of a bounded system, a clearly defined 'case', making it a 'case study' in Stake's view, which explores the developmental factors involved in students' evolving professional values during qualifying education, consonant with the Flyvbjerg's view of a case study. The investigation draws on various sources of data to provide rich and varied detail, whilst also seeking to preserve the integrity of the whole context (Punch 2009).

Additionally, I would suggest that the Merriam Webster definition of the case study as an *'analysis'* might indicate that a case study should go further than simply 'describing' in the way it works with data. This is a contested issue, handled variously by different theorists and

impacts on arguments relating to the generalisability of single unit studies, which will be explored below.

4.5 Generalisability and the Case Study: their value in educational settings

There are various typologies of case studies, organised around: outcome and function (Yin, 1994; Merriam, 1998); focus (Robson, 2002); application (Stake, 2008); discipline; or a combination of these (Stenhouse, 1985). Both Yin's and Merriam's classifications include 'descriptive' and 'interpretive/explanatory/analytical' types. Yin (1994) included 'exploratory' case studies (functioning as a pilot to other studies or research questions), whereas Merriam (1998:38-40) added 'evaluative' to her instructive list, which is summarised below:

1. A ***'descriptive'*** study presents a detailed account of the area under investigation, useful for presenting basic information about areas of education where little research has been done and for describing new and innovative programs and practices in education. Merriam quotes Lijphart (1971) who suggests these forms of study 'move in a theoretical vacuum', neither guided by, nor seeking to formulate generalized hypotheses.
2. ***'Interpretive'*** (or ***analytical*****)** case studies use richly descriptive data to analyse, interpret, explain and/or theorise about a phenomena, perhaps resulting in '*a typology, a continuum, or categories that conceptualise different approaches to the task*.' Merriam draws on Shaw (1978:4) to suggest 'analytical studies are differentiated from straightforward descriptive studies by their complexity, depth and theoretical orientation'.
3. ***'Evaluative'*** case studies involve description, explanation and judgement. Quoting Guba and Lincoln (1981:375), she writes: '*Above all else … this type of case study weighs "information to produce judgement…the final and ultimate act of evaluation"*'.

Stake's (2008) case study typology – (i) the *intrinsic*: where the case itself is of interest; (ii) the *instrumental*: where a case is chosen because of its interest and capacity to illustrate particular traits or problems and where understanding of the specifics may shed light on other cases; and (iii) the *collective*: the study of a number of cases – can be related directly to issues of generalisability in case study approaches.

A major critique of case study design asks how a single case can be considered representative, and therefore used legitimately to generalise more widely (Bassey 1981:85), with *representativeness* of sample enabling *generalisability* usually being considered hallmarks of 'scientific' social research (Bryman, 2008). This critique is particularly levelled at 'descriptive' or 'intrinsic' studies, where often no attempt is made to generalise beyond the single case or even to build theories (Silverman, 2000:103). Mason (1996:6 quoted in Silverman 2000:103) disputes whether a purely descriptive study is an appropriate outcome for qualitative research, contending; '*Qualitative research should produce explanations which are generalisable in some way, or which have a wider resonance*.' Even where there is the intention, as in an instrumental case, to shed light on other, 'similar' cases, questions of external validity are still raised on the basis that it remains a study of a single case; and although the 'collective' study in part mitigates against this critique through study of a collection of cases, the number of cases involved are typically small in order to manage and work with the rich detail involved in the case study approach, and are often not selected on the basis that they are representative samples (Bryman, 2008:33; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This line of critique favours positivist approaches to generalising, relying on frequency of events rather than significance of events as a route to understanding a situation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:293-4).

The educational philosopher Richard Pring (2000) cautions against creating false dualisms between educational research modelled on the social sciences, which ignores subtle differences in context; and research which focuses on the uniqueness of each context, eschewing generalisations which arise from large scale samples. He helpfully describes a middle way (Pring, 2000:140):

> No situation is unique in every respect. Educational practices are conducted or engaged in within societies of shared values and understandings. There are national, indeed global debates, which create common understandings. And there are generalisations about how people are motivated and learn, however tentative these must be and in need of testing in the circumstances of particular classrooms.

Pring (2000:137) believes that despite the unique situational impact of context, teacher perceptions and beliefs, learner aspirations and interpretations of the situation, '*there are sufficient similarities between contexts, and there is often sufficient agreement on*

understandings and values, for well-tested hypotheses in one situation to illuminate similar practice undertaken by others.' He is not alone in holding this view.

Investigating the question '*does educational research produce generalisations that are useful to teachers?*' Bassey (1981:73) comes to the conclusion that '*the study of single events is a more profitable form of research (judged by the criterion of usefulness to teachers) than searches for generalisations*'. He argues that merit of a case study lies in the extent to which a teacher working in a similar setting can relate it to his/her own teaching situations; and that therefore the criterion for judging the usefulness of case studies should be whether the details given are sufficient and appropriate to enable relation: '*The relatability of a case-study is more important than its generalisability*' (1981:85). Similarly, Mitchell (1983) proposes that it is the quality of the analysis more than the size of the sample which validates qualitative case studies. My own experience of finding invaluable theoretical and practical wisdom, directly relatable to my own teaching practice, in the writings of educational practitioners and theorists such as George Goetschius and Joan Tash (1967), Joan Tash (1967, reprinted 2000), Stephen Brookfield (1986, 1995) and bell hooks (1994, 2003) mirrors Bassey's conclusions.

Case studies have the advantage, in educational settings, of being a 'step to action', in that they begin in a world of action and contribute to it: insights may be directly interpreted and put to use (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1976). Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:323) believe:

> that the qualitative or ethnographic case study is the research approach that offers most to teachers because its principal rationale is to reproduce social action in its natural setting, ie. classrooms and workplaces, and that it can be used either to test existing theory or practice in an everyday environment, or it can be used to develop new theory or improve and evaluate existing professional practice.

Punch (2009:123) argues similarly: '*Properly conducted case studies, especially in situations where our knowledge is shallow, fragmentary, incomplete or non-existent, have a valuable contribution to make in education research*.' This is the case with knowledge of student development of professional values in qualifying education: and there is sufficient similarity in context and sufficient agreement in understanding and values across qualifying education[2]

[2] Similarity in context and sufficient agreement in understanding and values across qualifying education is created and sustained through the National Occupational Standards for youth work; the National Youth Agency validation process for Professionally Qualifying Courses; and forums such as

for my study, if properly conducted, to relate and be relevant to others (Pring, 2000:137): for it to have 'wider resonance', to use Mason's phrase (1996:6).

My case study strategy most closely resembles Merriam's 'interpretive / analytic' approach, as I aim to: explain and theorise about student value development; and secondarily to make some (tentative) judgements about the teaching and learning strategies well suited to supporting value development within my own practice and more widely in the field, as Hitchcock, Hughes, and Punch suggest is possible and Mason says is imperative. Pring reminds researchers that to do this well, the research should '*delineate those distinctive features which limit the possibility of generalisation*' (2000:137). I have sought to do this through carefully setting the context, outlining the likely unique features of the college setting, describing the students (with as much detail as ethical anonymity will allow) and offering detailed descriptions of how I have designed and implemented the curriculum.

Pring (2000:139) contends that educational research should meet four further criteria:

1. tentative conclusions stated with sufficient clarity that they can be tested against experience;
2. an explicit relation of such conclusions to relevant evidence;
3. a process of public scrutiny of procedures, of questioning the values;
4. a testing of alternative interpretations of the data, which may support more than one conclusion.

I aim to offer a clear outline of the data collection and analytical procedures employed, followed by a rich and detailed description, exploration and analysis of the data. Finally, I intend to offer some tentative, yet clearly stated, conclusions as to how students develop their professional values and the teaching and learning strategies which support this process, showing how these arise from and are evidenced within the data, providing a clear 'chain of evidence' (Yin, 2009:122), so the reader may follow the logic and procedures employed and can interrogate the values which have shaped the investigation.

Following Hitchcock's and Hughes' (1995:105) proposed criteria for validity in case study methods, I have sought to describe the intended phenomena clearly, accurately and authentically; to offer explanations which are justified by evidence presented in the text; and

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BERA – British Educational Research Association – and the youth work educators' 'Training Agencies Group'.

to use forms of data collection which are 'fit for purpose'. The next section of this chapter outlines the boundaries of the case being investigated and discusses the data collected, the methods employed for collection, ethical considerations and contingent factors.

4.6 The Youth Ministry Course as a Case Study – focus, boundaries and implications

The focus of my investigation comprised the experiences of three groups of youth work students (identified in this study as Groups A, B and C) on the Youth Ministry Course, whom I taught between 2008 and 2012. The course was taught on a modular basis, each module delivered over the course of a 12-week semester. Due to the small number of students typically enrolling each year on the Youth Ministry course, a mixed year group teaching strategy was employed, grouping first/second years, and second/third years together for particular modules, with these modules taught bi-annually. This was the case with the two modules I taught: Advocacy and Anti-discrimination ('Advocacy') and Informal Education.

The two-yearly pattern of teaching for each student group was the same: I taught Advocacy in one academic year to a group of first/second year students; and then Informal Education to the same group of students in the following academic year, when the group were in either their second or third year. This meant that some students studied Advocacy in their second year and Informal Education in their third year, whilst the following academic cohort took Advocacy in their first year and Informal Education in their second year. Both modules were required units for the Youth Ministry Course, so all youth work students took these classes.

My investigation initially intended to use data from only one group of students (Group B), to whom I taught Advocacy in Spring 2010 and Informal Education in Autumn 2010. As well as collecting 'naturally' generated data through the module teaching and learning strategies – such as weekly reflective journals and feedback sheets, module assessment material, email correspondence, and my own teaching journals – I also chose to interview each student in this group three times during the teaching process: in January 2010 before teaching them the Advocacy module; in between the two modules in September 2010; and then after the completion of the Informal Education module and the academic year in Summer 2011.The methods of data collection are outlined and explored in more detail in Section 4.6.

When I subsequently began teaching Advocacy in Spring 2012 to next academic cohort (Group C), I noticed that my teaching experience in the early part of the module felt very similar to my experience of teaching an earlier group (Group A), to whom I taught Advocacy back in 2008; and (more importantly) it felt different from the experience of teaching Group B (at that stage, my 'research' group). Groups A (2008) and C (2012) had taken much longer to understand and become comfortable with the teaching and learning methods utilised in the module and struggled to know how to use them well, something they wrote about often in their early journals. This did not seem to echo Group B's (2010) experience, who had responded to the teaching and learning methods with anticipation. I considered there may be two possible reasons for this:

1. Prior to beginning teaching Group B, the central research cohort, I had already met and interviewed the six Youth Ministry BA (Hons) students from this group before they took the Advocacy module. (There were two other students in this class on other courses who had elected to take the Advocacy module.) The interviews had required a preliminary set-up meeting with the student group and then involved an hour's one-to-one interview, where each student talked about themselves, how they had come to study youth work, their reasons for choosing this course in particular, followed by reflections on their personal values and accounts of their placements and youth work practice. By the start of teaching Group B, I had met and knew the name of all eight students in the class and felt I had established a positive rapport with them; and I had accumulated fairly detailed knowledge about the six youth work students, their previous experience and their reasons for studying youth work.

However, another possibility occurred to me, related to group size:

2. Group A comprised 13 students when I taught them Advocacy and Group C comprised 14 students; whereas Group B only comprised 8 students, enabling a more intimate and personal sense to the group-work style of teaching I employ. I wondered whether larger numbers in Groups A and C might account for this sense of difference between teaching Groups A and C and Group B.

I had previously reflected on the difference that interviewing students before teaching them had made to the start of my teaching experience with a group: as a visiting lecturer, walking into the first class already knowing the students felt very different to walking into a large classroom full of strangers, about whom I knew nothing – not even their names – and having to establish relationships as well as introduce the module and explain the curriculum,

teaching methods and assessment arrangements. As a result of my initial experience with group C, I questioned whether my research process – regularly raising the profile of 'professional values' with Group B students through the interviews – had inadvertently impacted on their teaching and learning experiences and positively influenced the data I was collecting from them through their class learning and assessment materials.

It was important to evaluate whether this was the case. This could be done through comparing the class journals from Groups A and C, whom I had not interviewed, with those of Group B, whom I had, to see if there was any significant difference in the way the groups articulated, developed and implemented their professional values. If this transpired to be the case, I considered it would not invalidate the research process. The knowledge gained about the positive impact of interviews would provide further evidence about those teaching and learning strategies most suited to supporting students in developing their values – in this case, opportunity for students to think and talk through their values and why they were involved in youth work early on in the course; and then ongoing dialogue with teaching staff and each other around values. In either case, it was important to establish whether, and the extent to which, the interviews had contributed significantly to the process of student value development within Group B students. As a result, I broadened the investigation to include the class-generated materials previously collected from Groups A and C where appropriate: and was grateful I had gained consent from Group A to use their journals in this study (see Section 4.6.1) .

The student groups and the data collected are laid out in Table 4 below. In practice, as there was so much data to work with, I have chosen to focus on the experiences of value development described by Group B – the main research participants – in their three interviews and their two sets of journals; and then have used Advocacy journal material from Groups A and C to support or offer a counterpoint to the experiences of Group B participants.

Table 4: Research Timetable and Data Collected

Student Group	Time	Research Activity	Teaching Activity	Data Collected
Group A 10 students participating in the research who gave me permission (retrospectively for Advocacy) to use their data	2008: Jan - Apr		**Advocacy Module** – 10 classes + assessment by presentation	10 weekly journals per student approx 100 journals
	2009: Jan - Apr	Used the InfEd Module as a '**pilot**' within research & negotiated research with students.	**Informal Education -** Intro class + 6 double classes Assessment by essay	3 learning journals per student approx 30 journals & weekly feedback sheets per student per class (72 in total)
Group B 6 students participating in research	2009: Nov – 2010: Jan	Negotiating research with students **Stage 1 Interviews**		6 interviews of approx 60 mins each
	2010: Jan - Apr	Teaching **Advocacy** as **Phase 1** of research	**Advocacy Module** – 10 classes + assessment by presentation	10 weekly journals per student approx 60 journals & weekly feedback sheets per student per class (60 in total)
	2010: Sep	**Stage 2 Interviews**		6 interviews of approx 60-75 mins each
	2010: Oct - Dec	Teaching **Informal Education** as **Phase 2** of research	**Informal Education** Intro class + 6 double classes Assessment by essay	8 practice journals per student, reflecting on their practice as informal educators approx 56 Journals & weekly feedback sheets per student per class (42 in total)
	2011: May & Nov	**Stage 3** (Final) **Interviews**		6 interviews of approx 60-75 mins each
Group C 11 students participating in research	2012: Jan - Apr		**Advocacy** – 10 classes + assessment by presentation	10 weekly journals per student approx 110 journals
	2012: Sep – Dec		**Informal Education -** Intro class + 6 double classes Assessment by essay	6 practice journals per student (66 in total), reflecting on their practice as informal educators

4.7 Choosing Methods for Data Collection

Case studies frequently draw on multiple sources of data and methods of data collection in order to provide rich and diverse detail for exploration and analysis (Punch, 2009). One advantage of using my own practice as the research site was the ability to collect data from diverse sources that were 'naturally generated' in the course of my teaching. Although I had access to a large set of data, including weekly student journals, weekly feedback sheets, student assessment material, email correspondence, my own teaching journals and class 'notes', I have primarily drawn on data from students' journals to retain a focus on their learning experiences and development. These are explained in more detail below. Based on my previous experience of using journals, I anticipated that this data would prove to be a rich source of evidence to support an investigation into how students develop their professional values. However, this was not necessarily guaranteed if students chose not to write about their exploration of values. In addition, then, for the sole purpose of the research, semi-structured interviews were used with the six youth work students from Group B, with questions framed specifically around their personal and professional values, how they articulated them, how they thought they would realise them in hypothetical youth work scenarios and how they described actually realising them in their practice.

4.7.1 Student journals

Student-written 'learning journals' are frequently used within education and social care professional training as 'vehicles for reflection' on their developing professional practice, enabling students to think about, explore and learn from their own actions and experiences in a way appropriate to professional status (Loughran, 1996, Moon, 2006). An example from one of the students' learning journals illustrates this:

> *I realised that, even though I think of myself as a good listener, I am not much better than anyone else. I started thinking about some of the discussions I have had with some of my young people, when I should have been simply listening to them. Instead I have often found that I have become distracted by what to say next and often missed the chance to discover and reflect on something new I might have learned about or from that young person. What is even worse is the fact that I am very quick to offer my opinion, something I really think I should restrain.* ***Tom, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 1***

As part of their qualifying assessment, many youth work degree courses require students to provide a portfolio of journals, reflections and wider material evidencing their ability to competently execute the diverse practice elements of work with young people. The function of journals in the Advocacy and Informal Education modules are explained in greater detail in the next chapter, Chapter Five, and are briefly reprised in Chapter Eight, which explores how students used the Advocacy journals for learning. For the purposes of this investigation, learning journals offered insight into students' perceptions of: values (their own and youth work values), their understanding of practice issues, their ability to think critically about issues and to engage in a dialogue between their own values and those of the youth work profession.

4.7.2 Interviews

In order to understand in greater depth students' thinking about values and how this developed through the course (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011), I designed a series of three, semi-structured interviews (see Table 5, p107 and Table 6, p108) to track the six students in Group B through the two modules I taught them. I interviewed each student three times: prior to teaching them Advocacy, in between teaching the two modules and at the end of teaching Informal Education, resulting in 18 interviews. Through this process, I aimed to track students':

- development in thinking about values;
- development in their ability to articulate what they understand by values;
- awareness of what their own values were and to what extent they were able to reflect on them;
- awareness of what had influenced/informed their development of these values and how consciously they had constructed and owned their value-base;
- developing knowledge about the values of youth work and where they had drawn these 'professional' values from;
- ability to engage in reflection and critical dialogue about the values of youth work and their own values and the interplay between the two;
- capacity for professional wisdom in the way they were able to think about complex situations in their own work and the work of others;
- and finally how they realised their values in practice.

For each stage of interviews, I sought to create a friendly and informal atmosphere, to reduce participants' fear of judgement, and to increase trust and openness (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:421-2). I devised a semi-structured interview guide, used a flexible, open-ended and discursive approach in the interviews with the participants, allowing for exploration of meanings and intentions. The interview structure framed the topic of the interview clearly for participants, focusing responses around the topic of values to generate data relevant to the research question. However, in keeping with a qualitative approach to research, I encouraged rich and detailed answers, giving space for longer answers, allowing participants time to think and working with the topics and answers participants considered important to tell me. The use of follow-up or 'exploratory' questions helped elicit more detailed answers from students, enabling their meaning to be explored in greater depth. I aimed to work through the guide questions in order, but this did not always make sense in the context of the interview and what participants had already said in answer to previous questions, so I worked with what participants discussed and what felt most appropriate in the moment and sought to ensure we had covered all the questions by the end of the interview (Bryman, 2008:438; Radnor, 1994:17).

A similar set of 'framing questions' were used at each stage of the interview process to track changes in response, although the first interview also included questions about the students, including basics about themselves and what motivated them to get involved in youth and community work, a question to elicit information about their values.

Pilot Interview

A pilot interview with a willing student from Group A revealed a number of issues in the interview schedule, enabling me to refine it and prepare and ask questions in a way that was more helpful to the participants and more useful for the research. For example, the question 'tell me about yourself' was too general, and did not give the interviewee enough of a framework to understand the information I was seeking. I addressed this in the interviews proper by writing broad areas of interest on a card, to which participants could refer.

Much consideration was given to how and where in the schedule to ask the question, 'how would you describe what 'values' are?'. The pilot interviewee reported finding this question challenging, despite giving what I considered was a solid response. However, reflection at the end of the interview revealed why this was. Earlier in the interview, I had asked the student about his personal values, and had then, at his request, outlined what I meant by

values – he admitted he had simply referred back to my definition in his answer! This was important learning for me. Despite being cautious about beginning with what might seem like an 'exam test' question with a 'correct' response, I chose to ask the question 'How would you describe what 'values' are?' before other questions on values: and, if it was appropriate, to recognise the abstract and challenging nature of the question, in order to minimise the idea of a 'correct' response. This approach also enabled me to explore whether students became more comfortable and confident in answering this question in successive interviews.

As a result of the pilot interviews, I also decided to make basic notes during the interview as prompts for myself of anything I might want to explore more fully within the interview.

Stage 1 Interviews

I interviewed the six students of Group B prior to teaching them Advocacy. I aimed to put the participants at their ease in this interview, particularly in the light of my role as 'lecturer' and of the nature of the early question about 'values', which might possibly appear like a test. I felt a more relaxed atmosphere would better enable participants to talk freely and give detailed answers to questions. After general introductions and administration, the Stage 1 interviews began by asking students for a brief 'pen picture' of the themselves, followed by their 'youth work story' (see the first question in Table 5.). I wrote these brief bullet points on a card, outlining the 'basic' information I was looking for: the students had the card to refer to as they answered the question, giving them a clearer guide as to the information I sought, whilst also encouraging space to talk in some depth about their journey into youth work. This elicited rich data about what motivated students to become involved in youth work in the first place and what guided their decisions as to the course they chose and their work placement, revealing something of their starting value base. From there, I asked participants the 'core' interview questions about values, as outlined in Table 5.

Typically, each answer involved a number of clarifications and exploratory questions to ensure I had correctly understood participants' meanings. Occasionally students gave answers to one question that were relevant to another, particularly when they used their practice to explain their personal values.

Table 5: Flexible Question Schedule for Stage 1 Interviews

Key Theme	Exploratory Question
Student's 'Pen Picture' and Youth Work 'Story'	Please introduce yourself including the following information; • name, age, gender, ethnicity • how long in youth work? • youth work experience, where and what? • why the NTC course? • where you work now – why there? • what motivated you to get involved in youth work? • anything else you think is important to you?
What are Values?	What do you understand by the term values – how would you define or describe what values are?
Personal Values	What values, beliefs, ideas or principles are important to you in living your life? (where are these from? influences? changes?)
Youth Work Values	What do you think are the core professional values in youth work? (principles/ commitments? what does that mean to you? Can you give me an example?)
Connection between Personal and Professional Values	When you think about your personal values and the professional values of youth work, how you feel they fit together? (do you feel they sit comfortably together, do you feel any points of tension or conflict?)
Values-in-Action	Can you tell me about a piece of work or a situation you were in as a youth worker where you were particularly aware of drawing on values to help you think and act?
Values-in-Theory	Please can you read through this youth work scenario and tell me what you think about it and the values involved.

Stage 2 and 3 Interviews

I interviewed the same students before teaching them Informal Education, in September 2010 and then after their exams / end of term in June 2011 (or in the case of two participants, November 2011). Each interview began with re-connecting, a general catch up and research administration. This was followed in Interview 2 by asking a process question about the interviews: how students felt the relationship that was now established between us as lecturer and student (through the first Advocacy module) would impact the research process and vice versa. I also asked this question at the end of the third interview, as a reflection on the whole process. This teacher/researcher and student/participant dynamic is explored further below in Section 4.6 on ethics and reflexivity.

In both the Stage 2 and 3 interviews (see Table 6), students were asked to reflect on what had changed for them since our last interview, in their life / work / placement situations and also whether there had been any 'significant learning moments' that stood out to them. I then followed the same schedule as for the Stage 1 interviews. After each answer, I showed the participants a summary of their answers from the previous (Stage 1 and 2) interview(s) and I asked them to use these to reflect on their understanding of their development. This produced some very interesting material about student perceptions of their learning and change over time.

In the final Stage 3 interview, I asked the participants to reflect on the whole research, particularly on the impact of my dual roles as teacher / researcher, and on the process of reviewing a 'previous snapshot' of themselves, through reflecting on the previous answers they had given. I also asked students to offer any feedback they wanted to about the course, and the Advocacy module in particular, thinking about what had been helpful and where they might like to suggest changes. These questions are listed at the end of Table 6.

Table 6: Flexible Question Schedule for Stage 2 and 3 Interviews

Key Theme	**Exploratory Question**
STAGE 2 ONLY	
Reflection on Interview Process	How do you feel about this interview now that we have an established relationship as student / lecturer? Do you think this dynamic affects how you might respond as a research participant?
STAGES 2 and 3	**Core Research Questions**
Changes Since Last Interview	a) Thinking back to the last interview, has anything changed for you in your practical circumstances that you consider important? b) Thinking about your time in college and placement, do any particular points of learning stand out to you? Has anything changed for you? Eg. any 'light-bulb' moments, particular readings, theory or incidents which have stayed with you? Can you explain and how they have influenced you / your practice?
What are Values?	a) What do you understand by the term values – how would you define or describe what values are? b) This is how you described values in the previous (two) interview(s). What are your thoughts/reflections on your previous answer? If you think there is a difference, what is different and why?
Personal Values	a) What are your personal values? beliefs, ideas or principles that are important to you in living your life? Are you aware of any changes from previous interviews? If so, what has changed and why? b) This is what you said previously. What are your thoughts/reflections

	on your previous answer? If you think there is a difference, what is different and why?
Youth Work Values	a) What are the core professional values in youth work? (principles/ commitments? what does that mean to you? Can you give me an example?) b) This is what you said previously. What are your thoughts/reflections on your previous answer? If you think there is a difference, what is different and why?
Connection between Personal and Professional Values	a) When you think about your personal values and the professional values of youth work, how you feel they fit together? (do you feel they sit comfortably together, do you feel any points of tension or conflict?) Is this any different to how you have felt previously? b) This is what you said previously. What are your thoughts/reflections on your previous answer? If you think there is a difference, what is different and why?
Values-in-Action	a) Can you tell me about a piece of work or a situation you were in as a youth worker where you were particularly aware of drawing on values to help you think and act? b) In your previous interview(s) you talked about this / these situations. What are your thoughts on these now?
Values-in-Theory	a) Here is the youth work scenario we looked at last time. Please can you read through it again to remind yourself and tell me what you think about it, the values involved and what you might do now, were you in this situation? b) This is what you said previously. What are your thoughts/reflections on your previous answer? If you think there is a difference in how you would think / act about this, what is different and why?
Stage 3 ONLY	**Additional Questions at the end of Stage 3 Interview**
Reflection on Developmental Journey	Thinking back to the start of your youth work training, in what ways do you think you have developed and how has this development occurred?
What helped?	What do you think were helpful elements of the Youth Ministry Course? Particularly in helping you develop your professional values? Eg. modules, specific teaching and learning strategies?
Research Process	What are your reflections on the overall process of these interviews? Do you think my dual role of both lecturer and researcher impacted the research process – and if so, how?

4.8 Issues arising from research site: Ethics and Reflexivity

4.8.1 Ethical considerations

Permission for Data Collection from the Research Site

Permission to use my classes at the College as my research site was sought from the Dean of the College and Head of Department by letter and discussion. Information about the research and how I intended to approach data collection was provided, as well as all the forms relating to ethical clearance from Durham University and the information I intended to give to the students. Both the Dean and Head of Department gave permission.

Particular consideration was given to the ethical implications of my dual role of researcher and teacher, and how to handle the imbalance of power that came with the position of teacher, marking students' final assessment. I was aware that students may have felt some pressure to participate in order not to be penalised in marking. I discussed this explicitly with the College and later with the students and asked the Head of Department (who was willing) to act as a confidential third party / external point of contact for students who may have had concerns about the research process itself, and/or its impact on the teaching and learning process, or their final grade for the course.

Consent from Individual Student Participants

Having established permission from the College, I then approached the student groups as follows:

Group A: In January 2009 I discussed my research with the students in their first informal education class (they already knew me as a teacher through the previous year's Advocacy class in 2008). I outlined the research, gave them time to read the Research Information sheet and the consent sheet and allowed students to ask questions or for clarifications. I was clear with students that: participation was voluntary; that if they chose not to participate this would not affect their experience of class; and that if they felt I was discriminating against them as a result of their choice not to take part in the research, that they should discuss this with the Head of Department. This process was written in the Research Information Sheet. The consent form asked for itemised permission to use the students' class material (journals, feedback sheets, email correspondence, permission for me to write about class experiences)

from the Informal Education class, as well as asking retrospective permission to use the same material from Advocacy the previous year as part of the research data. At the point of asking this, I had not known whether I would use all their data in the research, and asked more as a precautionary measure. However, it was extremely useful to have already obtained their permission to use this data, when in 2012, I decided it may prove useful additional data.

Group B: In November 2009, with the help of the Head of Department, I met with student Group B to explain the research. I used a similar process as with Group A, again stressing voluntary participation and the processes in place to safeguard this, and additionally explained that I was asking them to consider allowing me to interview them up to three times, throughout the teaching process. All six students agreed to participate fully in the research process, including being interviewed. They completed the same consent forms as Group A, giving written itemised permission for me to use their class material (journals, feedback sheets, email correspondence, permission for me to write about class experiences) from both modules. They gave me (tape-recorded) verbal consent at the start of each interview, confirming their willingness to participate in the research and giving me permission to use their interview data. Having already gained written permission from this group, it did not occur to me at the time to seek further, specific written permission to use the interview data, particularly as I sought consent verbally at the start of each interview, reminding participants they could break from the interview at any time, withdraw or revisit any comments they were unhappy with, or even withdraw from the whole interview or research process. I now consider this lack of written permission specifically for the interview data an error, as I should have made clear in writing to participants the arrangements for the use of interview material and agreements regarding their right to review, check and change interview material used in the final thesis (Cohen, Manion& Morrison, 2011). Although I have no ethical concerns about the students' consent to use the interview data and am confident that the way the data has been used is consonant with the permissions sought, the lack of written consent and clarity about participants' rights over data betrays, at that early stage of the research process, the workings of a novice researcher, who has since learned from her lack of rigour in this area.

Group C: As I had not initially intended to use material from this student group, their permission was not sought until part way through the Advocacy Module in February 2012. Again, I approached the College Dean and sought permission to include material from a

further student group in my research, which was given. Individual student permission was negotiated as above with Group A students in their class.

Confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality were assured to all student participants in the research. This has been attempted primarily through assigning alterative names to students, and by anonymising all names of places and identifying information and situations. However, particularly with Group B, due to its size, it is possible that those who are familiar with the College and the students might be able to identify some of the students described and may possibly be able to attribute comments to a student. It is probable that the people who could do this (and who also might read the research report) are likely to be the teaching staff at the College, who will also be bound by professional teaching ethics in not revealing the identity of the students and the participants themselves. To that end, I re-contacted the students in 2015 to discuss this issue and to check a) that they were willing for me to write in enough detail about their motivations for engaging in youth work that they might be 'recognisable' to the other participants and possibly to a few members of the college staff (this was particularly important for the only black student in Group B, whose experiences as a black man shaped his values significantly); and secondly that, if they chose to read the thesis they would agree not to divulge the real names of anyone they recognised. All participants agreed to this. I also asked them if they would like to me to send them a copy of the final thesis when completed: they politely declined.

Respondent Validity

This study makes use of the written and spoken words of participants (primarily in the form of journals, interviews and assessment material). Although I have interpreted this, I have sought to make clear what is my interpretation, through offering supporting evidence in the form of direct quotations from participants' interviews and journals. Having said this, I recognize that even direct quotations, particularly ones transcribed from oral interviews, can be understood in many ways. 'Listening' for meaning through inflection, pauses, emotion and what has gone before in the interview is important context in helping determine meaning, context which is unfortunately not available to the reader.

For that reason, researchers using interviews are often encouraged to send transcripts to participants, allowing them to check, revise or elucidate answers to ensure 'respondent

validity' (Radnor, 1994:17) before beginning the data analysis. Although I offered to send students a transcript of the interviews if they wanted (none took me up on this), I made a decision early on not to offer students the option to make 'corrections': I deliberately did not want later alterations, corrections or additions to the answers, as I felt this opportunity to revise answers may have skewed the data, for example if students were dissatisfied with what they felt was a poor attempt at defining the term 'values', and chose to revise that after consideration and research post interview. Instead I chose to show students their previous answers to questions in the following interview, using their earlier answers as a tool to enable them to reflect on their learning and development around the particular key themes I was exploring. For example, I invited participants to answer the question in the second interview about their personal values and then showed them a verbatim transcript of key passages from their previous answer from interview 1. Their reflections on their previous answers were an important part of the interview process, enabling collection of their perceptions of the change they were going through and what was happening for them at the earlier stage.

4.8.2 Reflexivity

I sought to be reflexive throughout the whole research process, beginning with my awareness of my own identity and how that shapes my experiences in the world, which I explored in Chapter One. I was particularly aware of my responsibilities as a teacher and regularly raised this with students to ensure they were comfortable with my dual role of teacher / research. I worked hard at the beginning of each interview to establish a good rapport with participants: as a youth worker I am practised at reflecting on the power dynamics in relationships and I sought to utilise this skill in my research interviews.

Teacher / Researcher Dynamic in Interviews

In the Stage 2 and 3 interviews the dynamic of the researcher / participant relationship had changed since the first interview: previously I was unknown to the students, but in the Stage 2 interview I was in the middle of teaching them two modules, so was teacher as well as researcher. I raised this change in the Stage 2 interview and asked whether and how they thought my dual role of teacher and researcher might influence or might have influenced their responses. Generally, participants reported that it was not an issue they had considered until I brought it up (Jamie); and that they did not think our teaching relationship would change or had changed their answers. However, it is possible that the participants wanted to

be helpful or simply told me what they thought I wanted to hear, in order to please me in both my teacher and researcher roles. There is some evidence of this in the interviews: in the first interview, whilst struggling to articulate his thoughts, Tom said '*I'm not being a help to you*' (Tom, Interview 1). Clearly, at times the student participants wanted to give 'good' answers, particularly in relation to the question about professional values in youth work, and they often worried that their answers to this question were unsatisfactory, which they felt may reflect badly on them, or possibly the college or the teaching staff, including myself. In this respect, I recognised that students understandably might feel pressure to show themselves in as good a light as possible to someone involved in the college, and that it was clear they also wanted to be helpful in the research process, resulting in them giving as full an answer as possible to my questions. On balance then, I considered students' willingness to participate was helpful for the research process, rather than mitigating against it.

4.9 Selecting, Organising and Analysing the Data

The focus of the research required an exploratory, predominantly inductive approach to examining the collected data. I was already familiar with the data in journals from Groups A and B – having read them and discussed them with students through the teaching process – so although I had some loosely formed thoughts at that stage about how students had used them for their value development, I sought to hold these ideas lightly so as not to unduly influence the analysis process. However, in reality, having structured the modules and teaching and learning strategies based on my knowledge of values development through the principles and practices of informal education, I also drew on deductive approaches at times, relating the data to existing theories to make sense of the findings.

Both the interviews and journals produced extremely rich and sometimes very personal data. With 18 interviews, 60 Advocacy learning journals and 48 Informal Education reflective journals, totalling over 290,000 words from Group B alone, with a further 210 Advocacy journals and 96 Informal Education journals from the adjacent cohorts, I decided to focus my attention on data from Group B, and have used Advocacy journal material from Groups A and C to support or offer a counterpoint to the experiences of Group B participants where significant.

The eighteen interviews were transcribed at each stage. I both read and listened to the interviews a number of times to familiarise myself with them, organising the data in various ways as I did this, to find the most helpful way of 'reading' and understanding it. Initially, I read each interview at each stage as they were transcribed, making general notes on each interview. Then, when I had completed the interviews, I re-organised the data by interview stage and key theme – for example reading all of the students' answers about personal values at Stage 1, then Stage 2, then Stage 3 to explore concepts and developments, and then moving on to youth work values, and so on. This approach was somewhat challenging as students often drew on or included material in one key theme that was also relevant to another key theme, demonstrating the complex and interconnected nature of personal and professional values and their influence on practice; for example students often spoke about their personal values in relation to their work with young people, also giving information about their thinking on youth work values and drawing on examples from their youth work practice to illustrate these, thereby providing data relevant to the questions about youth work values, how they fitted together and on how they realised their values in their practice. This phenomenon increased through the interview process as students gained more experience and began to see the connections between their personal values, their professional values and how these related to their practice. Finally, I read the interview data by person, reading through all three interviews from Stages 1 to 3, to understand the change and development in each student over time, adding to the notes I had made previously.

Despite the complexity, I found it most helpful to consider the interview data by key theme, although it took me a while to reach this decision. This approach seemed most appropriate as I wanted to focus on and explore connections across participants in their values development, rather than focus on the individual development of six students. There were similarities in what students were saying in the interviews about their values development that supported this approach.

A more structured process of open coding was then undertaken to allow concepts to emerge from the data. Using Nvivo software to support this, the interviews and journals were read again, section by section, and coded. My first attempt at coding was far too detailed, concentrating on too many micro categories and creating too many codes; it very quickly became unwieldy and unmanageable, so I discarded this attempt, and started again, re-thinking my approach to coding and looking for bigger concepts, in a process described by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:560):

> Coding is not a one-off exercise; it requires reading and rereading, assigning and reassigning codes, placing and replacing codes, refining codes and coded data; the process is iterative and requires the researcher to go back and forth through the data on maybe several occasions, to ensure consistency and coverage of codes and data.

I used two approaches to coding the interview data: an 'organisational' approach, firstly coding the material by my 'key themes', so I had all the data relating to each key theme, for example students' discussion of their personal values, accessible in one place, a broad process akin to 'lumping' (Saldaña, 2009:19-20). Reading through the data in these codes, I began a process of 'splitting' (Saldaña, *ibid*) to generate a more nuanced set of codes arising from the data, using conceptual words and phrases, such as 'aware', 'self-realise', 'emotion', 'confidence', 'complexity v simplicity', 'difference' and 'helpful' to code examples of these concepts, after which I 'grouped' similar codes together to see broader themes. At this point, I sought to understand how these concepts related to students' value development, through annotating print outs of the grouped coded data and then exploring connections through writing. At many points I found myself getting lost in the richness and detail of the data, requiring me to stand back and seek to make sense of over-arching developmental themes. At this point, I drew on a more instinctive and creative analytical approach, searching for over-arching themes and narratives (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). The outcomes of this analysis is explored in Chapters Six and Seven.

Although I was already familiar with the student-written journals, for the purposes of this investigation, I analysed the journals, again utilising Nvivo to support this process, using themes identified through a combined inductive and deductive approach (Bryman, 2008). I was aware of some of the ways in which students had used their journals to develop their professional values, but I was also open to themes arising out of the students' writing that I had not necessarily been expecting and that linked with the interview data themes. Chapter Eight explores how students used their journals to support their value development.

4.10 Summary of Methodology

In this chapter I have explained the rationale for using a practitioner research longitudinal case study approach for the investigation into student value development. Case studies are well suited to exploring questions relating to process, of which the focal question on values

development is an example: and longitudinal studies enable change through time to be captured. My primary interest in undertaking research has been both for my own learning and to contribute knowledge to the youth and community work teaching community; hence my choice to use as a case study the setting in which I was already practicing.

The research strategy was predominantly inductive, framed within an interpretivist and constructionist (after Crotty, 1998) epistemology. I used both data generated naturally within the teaching and learning strategies of the two modules I taught – journals form the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination and Informal Education modules – with the addition of three in-depth interviews per student for one of the teaching groups involved in the research. Both these sources provided rich descriptive data about students' developing values and their understanding of their own values development journey. I explained my rationale for choosing not to offer students the opportunity to revise their answers after interviews and instead, showing them answers to questions in the following interviews, using this as a tool to elicit their reflection on what had changed for them and their understanding of their development from one interview to the next. This method was effective in enabling students themselves to re-interpret their previous answers in the light of their subsequent knowledge and development, revealing some significant and honest insights: for example, it became apparent that students were able to use the 'language' of youth work values before they fully understood the meaning of the value concepts these terms represented and before they were able to realise the related value principles in their practice.

The next chapter explores the how I drew on the principles and practices underpinning informal education to devise the curriculum for the Advocacy module, in line with QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for youth and community work (2017:10), which states:

> The process of honours level education in youth and community work should, as far as possible, be congruent with the educational processes that practitioners are being trained to use in community settings, while recognising the formal and assessed nature of an honours degree.

Chapter Five: The Context, the Students and the Curriculum Design

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the methodology used in this investigation: drawing on epistemologies and designs congruent with the nature of the research: values development in youth work students. This chapter further explores the context of the case study first introduced in Chapter One, the curriculum design of the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination module and concludes with an introduction to the six students who participated in the interview process.

5.2 Context of the Case Study

Section 1.5 (on page 18) set the context of the research by locating it in a period of time – beginning just after the global financial crash and concluding during the Brexit process – and in a place – a 'confessional' Christian theological college in a northern city: open about the Christian faith of the college, 'committed to the mission of God' and with a desire to see people explore their calling, flourish both academically and spiritually and be well prepared for their future ministry. Research participants were drawn from the BA (Hons) Theology: Youth Work and Ministry (with JNC qualification) degree course, and Section 1.5 explored in some detail the structure of the course, its curriculum and units.

Due to the small number of applicants to the youth work and ministry course, some of the youth work modules were taught to combined year groups, of first and second years (in the case of the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination module) and of second and third years (in the case of Informal Education). The interview participants (Group B students) represented a particularly small combined year group of four first and two second year students who were taking the youth work degree course. There were initially more students in the first year, but they either moved to different (non-youth work) courses or had taken Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination as an elective and were not youth work students. The next section explores the design of the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination curriculum.

5.3 Advocacy & Anti-Discrimination Curriculum Design

This section explores the curriculum design for the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination module. I have chosen to focus on this module as the methods employed in it are somewhat unusual. The educational philosophy and the teaching and learning strategies outlined in relation to this module also shaped how I developed the Informal Education module, although the class teaching and assessment methods used in that module were more traditional.

The Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination module was taught in college every two years to a combined group of first and second year youth and community work students, as a required module for the Youth Work and Ministry degree. I was eager to take up the opportunity to teach the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination Module when asked in 2006; it is a subject about which I feel strongly, and I was particularly interested in supporting students to examine, develop and embed their values in practice, rather than anti-oppressive practice simply becoming a tick-box exercise for students in 'saying the right thing'. This was something that was also of concern to the college. I was given freedom to redesign the teaching and learning strategies and content for the unit, whilst keeping roughly to the Learning Outcomes (see Appendix 1) agreed with the accrediting university. When thinking through my approach, I was mindful of Carl Rogers' (1969:152-154) somewhat startling reflections on teaching and learning, observations that had stayed with me long after first reading them.

> It seems to me that anything that can be taught to another is relatively inconsequential and has little or no significant influence on behaviour. That sounds so ridiculous that I can't help but question it at the same time I present it. [...] [the] only learning which significantly influences behaviour is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning. Such self-discovered learning, truth which has been personally appropriated and assimilated in experience, cannot be directly communicated to another.

Rogers' very personal comments struck a chord with me, resonating with my experiences as a youth worker and informal educator. His thinking challenged me to consider how I could set out to 'teach' a *praxis* which I hoped would foster '*learning which significantly influenced behaviour*' – anti-oppressive practice in youth work – and which would be neither *inconsequential* nor *damaging*, as Rogers' (*ibid*) believed his attempts at more didactic forms

of 'teaching' had been. Equally, I sought to translate what I could of the principles of informal education into the much more formal setting of higher education. So here was my challenge: how I might design a curriculum for teaching and learning in a formal context that would enable students to:

a) draw on, 'enlarge' and critique their own experiences and make space to hear and work with others' experiences;
b) recognise the values that underpinned their current thinking and practice and examine them in the light of the professional values of youth work, particularly its commitment to anti-oppressive practice and social justice;
c) share in this process collectively with others, in a 'safe enough' space which facilitated participation in thoughtful, expressive and dialogical discussions of value issues, rather than uncritical monologues and reactive diatribes;
d) appropriate learning for themselves and begin to embed it in their practice;
e) recognise and engage with process in our educational encounter.

In order to do so, I believed I needed to:

- start with students' experiences and understandings;
- make space for the affective elements of the learning process to be recognised and worked with alongside the cognitive elements;
- use dialogical and problem-posing approaches, rather than didactic approaches;
- pay attention to the processes inherent in the educational encounter, both intended and unintended, seen and hidden, as much as the curriculum 'subject matter';
- make space for informal episodes within the formal framework; and
- pay attention to the relationship between teacher and pupil (in line with the thinking that the 'environment' in which informal education happens is primarily mediated by the relationship between participants.

In exploring these ideas, I recalled David Potts' (1988:132-149) chapter in Boud (ed, 1988) *Developing Student Autonomy 2nd Edition*, where he outlines his pioneering approach to teaching and learning – what he called one-to-one discussion – in a history-sociology course at La Trobe University, Melbourne. The idea for the one-to-one discussion method was largely based on a therapeutic 'encounter group' technique he had experienced in the UK whilst researching learning innovation, which foregrounded '*uninterrupted talking-through*' (*ibid*:133). He found various forms of co-counselling theory that supported this practice, notably a paper by Jerome Liss, (quoted in Potts, *ibid:133*) in which Liss argues:

> People in their daily lives are too often interrupted and not permitted to complete their thoughts. Direct interruptions, meaning one person speaks while the other is still talking, can block one talker's mind if he does not finish his say....Repetitive interruptions not only chop up the ongoing stream of thoughts and feelings of the moment, but the two-person pattern is internalised and repeated by the interrupted person's mind when alone. Thus, people who feel 'blocked', 'stuck', 'bogged down' or 'hemmed in' have been stopped by others from unraveling their thoughts and feelings and are plagued by self-interrupted thoughts when alone.

Potts (ibid:133) goes on to observe that *'students' experiences of traditional tutorial discussion are more of interruption than self-expression'* and that traditional academic discussions offer:

> some chance for a fruitful clash of competing ideas already formed, but not for careful and individual development of ideas. In my experience, students who are trying to work up their ideas are quickly attacked on any weaknesses, weaknesses they could have corrected themselves given more space. They become frustrated and defensive and few I think try to work it all out.

Potts took the 'uninterrupted talking-though' method, along with a set of principles he had developed through his research and developed a course methodology to 'teach' a course in Mexican history. In the course workshops, he asked students to pair up, sit alertly, facing each other and ask each other, in turn, questions he devised. The speaker had (typically) three minutes to work on an answer to the question, whilst the listener did as their role title suggested; they listened attentively and supportively, without interrupting in any way. At the end of three minutes, a timer would ring, and the roles would be reversed. This method filled three hours' of workshops. Potts designed 'Zen-like', open-ended questions around Mexican history but also included questions that aimed to build student's confidence and self-knowledge. He asked for a weekly, written journal from the students based on their workshop experiences and also arranged for the course to be non-graded.

I considered the one-to-one methodology could be a way of enabling students to critically explore their own and youth work's values in a 'safe-enough' environment and to explore and critique their values for themselves, to hear the experiences of others and to 'discover and appropriate for themselves' (Rogers, 1969:153) learning relevant to the subject of advocacy and anti-discrimination. It seemed to me that the processes devised by Potts had integrity both with informal education and with the subject material of anti-oppressive practice, with space to engage in thoughtful and critical dialogue that: prioritised students' experiences

and critical reflection on them; and gave students responsibility for setting their own learning agendas, albeit with some support and guidance from me as tutor.

I discussed with the college my thinking and ideas about the teaching and learning strategies I hoped to use, alongside learning outcomes, content, assessment processes and grading; and then developed a process curriculum (Stenhouse, 1975; Grundy, 1987) drawing heavily on Potts' work, but with contextual adjustments, as follows:

1. Each week, using Potts' example, we sat in pairs and worked on a series of questions, which I suggested, but which the students were free to adapt or ignore (as I was unable to 'police' the content of their paired work, allowing for a differentiated approach to student learning (Belton & Frost, 2010)). This context became the main vehicle for exploring the module curriculum, students' values, learning and practice.
2. Periodically, I worked with the whole group to encourage them to explore and share their experiences of the class process together and to explore subject theory together (although journals – and staff! – told me that students also frequently did this themselves, informally, outside of the class).
3. For some sessions, I invited guests in to share their own lived experiences, in order to enable students to hear people describing, defining and interpreting their own experiences of oppression or marginalisation; and to give students opportunity to interact with these experiences.
4. I gave some guidance each week as to what students *could* explore to prepare for the coming week's workshop – usually reading on theory that I thought was helpful in understanding issues of power and oppression. Where possible, I made links to what was happening in the news; sometimes I would suggest films that explored some of these themes. I was clear these were ***suggestions,*** albeit informed suggestions; if they found other areas or ways of study related to the topic that they wanted to explore further themselves, they were at liberty to follow their own interests. If this meant watching a film, listening to their partner, reading the paper and thinking through the issues relating to power, oppression, advocacy and anti-discrimination that these activities revealed, that was their choice; they did not need my 'permission' to manage their own studies. What was important was what stimulated them to learn about the subject. They of course could opt to do nothing at all, although I sincerely hoped they would not pursue this option.

5. Like Potts, I negotiated with the college that the course was non-graded; it was marked on a pass / fail basis. This was possible as the course did not contribute to the student's final degree grade, but they did need to pass the module in order to qualify for the JNC award. It was also devised at a time: when innovation in teaching and learning strategies was welcomed; when education was less marketised, target-driven and outcome focused than it is now; and when course rubric and requirements around learning outcomes, formative and summative feedback and 'word-pots' were much less stringent.
6. At the end of each class, I asked students to complete a handwritten 'Critical Incident Questionnaire' (Brookfield, 1995:115) in order to receive brief anonymous feedback about student's experiences in the class (see Appendix 2).
7. Weekly journal submission was a compulsory element of the module, although journals were not graded on content, only on submission. I explained that they would be carefully read but would not be 'marked'. Students could choose to write about what they wanted and it would not affect their pass / fail status so long as they were submitted on time. I allocated writing time for the weekly 400-word journals in the notional 100 hours for the module and trusted that students would choose to use the process of journal writing and reflection for their benefit. I gave guidelines on how journals might best be used for students' learning and encouraged students to write about what was of interest and value to them, suggesting they should be writing for their benefit, not to please me. (These guidelines are in the Module Outline in Appendix 1).
8. Lastly, I arranged for students to give an end of course presentation of their learning to the whole class and a second marker, which would include their own self-assessment as to whether they believed they had passed the module, assessing themselves against an agreed set of criteria. Their self-assessment, supported by evidence, was given priority in their final pass / fail assessment, with supporting tutor, second marker and peer feedback.

I wrote a Module Introduction (Appendix 1), in an attempt to introduce and explain the rationale for the teaching and learning methods employed in the module. The introduction explained:

- the concept of youth work as a praxis and the type of knowledge this relied on (after Aristotle);
- the importance of self-awareness and self-reflection in youth work;
- the one-to-one learning method as a way to

    - practice the discipline of listening with intention and commitment (Lindahl, 2004)
    - develop the practice of well-reasoned critical thinking without interruption, whilst also
    - demonstrably re-framing the traditional teacher-student dynamic and approaches to learning within the class experience;
- the importance of the workshops as a source of experiential learning; and
- the rationale for and practical issues around
    - the assessment process and
    - the weekly journals.

In the first class of the module I introduced the module subject, learning outcomes and methods. I found the most effective way to do this (the approach I used with Group B in 2010) was to give the students time to read through the Module Introduction in the first half of the class. Reading in class encouraged the students to engage with the material themselves, and invariably they demonstrated this through their discussions in class and in their early journals.

I will now explore in more depth the main elements of the teaching and learning strategies employed in this module.

5.4 One-to-One Paired Learning

Although Potts termed his paired 'talking-through' exercise 'one-to-one discussion', I found this title slightly misleading; 'discussion' is not the central feature of the encounter. Instead I refer to it as one-to-one learning, or paired learning, as a description of the method (paired work) and purpose (learning) of the encounter.

Although Potts primarily appeared to use the method to help students develop their critical thinking (as outlined above), I also quickly understood from students that the method was also helping them learn about listening; listening to themselves, to each other and to the Spirit within them (however they chose to understand that). For many of the Christian students, it was both important and helpful that I linked this discipline into their faith framework and practice. Listening carefully to another's experience is a key skill in anti-

oppressive practice; and being willing to do so, a key disposition. Listening is not passive or technical, but dynamic and creative, and for that reason Kay Lindahl (2004), a teacher and writer on listening, refers to it as an 'art'. We are taught to speak, to debate, to present, to preach, to explain, but very rarely, she says, are we taught (or do we learn) to listen with our full attention.

We frequently listen in very superficial ways, which means we do not hear fully what others say and are often ourselves left feeling unheard or misunderstood by others who, in turn do not listen properly to us. We are inundated with poor examples of listening: we are constantly interrupting each other, eager to input our own point of view and to be listened to. Even when we are not speaking, but supposedly listening to someone, Lindahl (*ibid*) suggests we may be busy at the computer, or washing up, or working out what we want to say next. Very rarely are we giving our full attention to the person who is speaking with us (Crosby, 2001).

> [Listening] takes intention and commitment. We need to slow down to expand our awareness of the possibilities of deep listening. The simple act of listening can transform all our relationships. Indeed it can transform the world, as we practice the change we want to see in the world. Listening is the first step in making people valued. (Lindahl, 2004:2,4)

This kind of transformative listening is '*a choice, a gift and an art*' *(ibid).* We need to make a deliberate ***choice*** to engage in this kind of deeply attentive listening. Attentive listening is a ***gift*** we give to someone and it is an ***art*** that we need to practice and master. Lindahl identifies three foundational qualities of listening;

- ***silence*** is a pre-requisite of the contemplative listening practice associated with prayer and listening to God,
- ***reflection*** is the practice of listening inwardly, to ourselves
- ***presence*** is the ability to 'be fully present' with someone, to give ourselves completely to listening to them without distraction.

Lindahl's descriptions are a helpful and challenging way to think about listening. The paired learning method offered students the opportunity to practice this form of deep, attentive listening on a weekly basis.

5.4.1 Implementing the paired learning method

The paired learning method focused on fostering two skills: the discipline of listening with intention and commitment (Lindahl, 2004); and the practice of well-reasoned critical thinking. In the first class, after reading the Module Introduction, we discussed, then practised this method and then reflected on it, first in pairs and then together as a class. Potts' (1988:134-135) suggested etiquette during the paired work was that 'the listener' would ask a question of 'the speaker' and then listen attentively, without interrupting, whilst the speaker sought to answer it. At the end of that time, the 'listener' would thank the 'speaker' and then roles would be reversed: the speaker would become the listener and vice versa. I adopted this 'etiquette' in class, encouraging students to engage fully in the process, including how they sat and paid attention with their bodies. This speaking / listening cycle would be repeated and the final cycle offered an opportunity for the pair to talk/discuss/reflect together. These 5 x 3 minute phases took 15 minutes in total. Directions were written on a smart board, as follows:

On smart board	denotes
A 3	A speaks for 3 minutes (B listens)
B 3	B speaks for 3 minutes (A listens)
A 3	A speaks for 3 minutes (B listens)
B 3	B speaks for 3 minutes (A listens)
AB 3	A and B discuss together for 3 minutes.

Students were asked to pair up and when paired, the process began. If there was an odd number of students, I would form a pair: if an even number of students, I would sit, observe and wait for the students to complete the cycle, offering directions at the end of each three-minute slot. When not participating in a pair, I found it important to 'participate' in the exercise by sitting calmly and paying attention to the class, despite my own anxiety about how students were managing the practice or the desire to busy myself with an activity, such as reading or fussing with papers. I saw this both as an opportunity to 'model' the disposition of giving full attention and as a way of 'holding' the space and 'containing' any class anxiety through my demeanour (Bion, 1984; Casement, 2014), concepts drawn from counselling practice of which I had learned through my supervision training.

In addition, I wrote the suggested question for consideration on the board, along with the piece of theory it referenced. In the early classes, the cycles always began with a deceptively simple question, but one that I believed was at the heart of the process of developing

professional values: '*Please tell me who you are*' (Moss, 2007, Palmer, 1998). Like Potts, I sought to make questions as open ended as possible.

As the course progressed through the weeks, the questions developed. Sometimes they offered space to reflect on class activities, such as;

Week 2	Round 1	Please tell me about your experience of writing your journal. A2, B2, A2, B2
		Group discussion reflecting on their experiences of writing a journal.

Week 3	Round 1	Please tell me who you are. A3, B3, A3, B3, AB3
	Round 2	What helps you answer this question well? A3, B3, A3, B3, AB3

More often, they referenced the suggested weekly reading, for example:

Week 2	Round 3	What is it to be human? A3, B3, A3, B3, AB3
	Round 4	What is oppression and liberation? A3, B3, A3, B3, AB3
	Round 5	To what extent do you see yourself as a woman / man engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human? A3, B3, A3, B3, AB3

Week 3	Round 3	Tell me about your experience of education? - to what extent has it been 'banking' or 'problem-posing'? A3, B3, A3, B3, AB3
	Round 4	Tell me about your experience of education? - to what extent has it been 'banking' or 'problem-posing'? What have you internalised? What do you copy? A3, B3, A3, B3, AB3
	Round 5	To what extent are you critical co-investigators in dialogue with 'the teacher'? A3, B3, A3, B3, AB3

Although I devised a detailed timetable of the cycles of paired learning, interspersed with group discussion, and time at the end of class to complete Critical Incident Questionnaires, in practice I treated these plans flexibly, aiming to respond to what was happening in the group, but without abandoning the plans entirely. The journals demonstrated that students unsurprisingly found it challenging to work with some of the questions: but they used this struggle as a source of reflection in journals.

5.5 Learning Journals: A Vehicle for Self-Directed Reflection

Having used a form of learning journal in my own youth work qualifying education, I was interested to read that Potts advocated their use as an essential complementary tool to the workshops in his teaching process, creating a space for students to reflect on any aspect of their learning experience as they chose (or not, if they opted to write about something altogether different). The use of learning journals seemed congruent with the educational approach I was taking and the self-directed, critically reflective environment I hoped to foster. Moon (1994:1-2) asserts that a learning journal is '*a vehicle for reflection*' and advocated for a loose definition of the term 'journals', arguing that the '*creative development of personal terms is an aspect of the very process of reflective learning'*. She uses the term 'learning journals' to '*refer to an accumulation of material that is mainly based on the writer's processes of reflection. It is written over a period of time, not in 'one go"* (*ibid*). This is how I use the term in this study.

The process of writing journals enhances the '*favourable conditions for learning*' (ibid:26-35), by:

- slowing the pace of learning
- increasing the sense of ownership of learning
- providing an acknowledged place for emotions in learning
- giving learners experience of working with the 'ill-structured' or uncertain material of learning
- encouraging learning about ones own processes of learning (metacognition)
- enhancing learning through the process of writing itself.

It is the examination of and reflection on experience that fosters learning, rather than simply 'having the experience' itself (Dewey, 1986, 2008). Consequently, journals were utilised as a way of supporting students to practice and develop their reflective skills, in order to make the tacit dimension of their knowledge and experiences known (Polanyi, 1967; Loughran, 2006), by:

- returning to their experience;
- connecting with their feelings in and about these experiences; and by
- evaluating the experience (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985).

Central to this reflective process is students' ability to recognise, understand and explore the meaning they attach to the experiences they have (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985; Moon, 2006:23-24), and how these meanings shape their perceptions of other phenomena. It is through this process of naming and examining, that meanings can be strengthened or re-framed, by drawing on '*helpful feelings and removing or containing unhelpful ones*' (Jeffs & Smith, 2005:59). Journals were a space where students processed and worked with their understanding of events and experiences and the meanings they ascribed to them. In addition, reading student journals became a valuable insight for me, in my role as tutor, into the meaning-making that students engaged in, in line with Schön's (1987) assertion that it is of more value for teachers to understand and work with the meanings students attach to phenomena than for teachers to seek to explain their meanings to students.

Providing a space through journaling for students to explore their emotional responses both to the learning methods and the sometimes emotive subject material was extremely valuable. Journals helped students 'vent' in a safe and reflective way, whilst being aware that I would read, but not grade, their submissions (Potts, 1988; Brookfield, 1995). Often they would question and explore why they experienced a particular emotion or had taken a particular action, leading them to identify the underlying values that informed these thoughts, feelings and actions (Loughran, 1996). Journals proved to be valuable tool in students' value development to grow their self-awareness and make connections between their thinking, feelings and actions. They also offered an important insight to me, as teacher, into how students were thinking both about the subject material (Loughran, 1996) and how they were engaging with the unusual teaching strategies (Brookfield, 1995), although this was not the primary purpose of the journals.

I offered guidance to students on material they might want to consider writing about, as follows:

Hints on Writing Journals

Some suggestion on what you could write about…

- Write for yourself, be honest and make it useful to you.
- Write about your experiences in the workshops, how you found the exercises and paired working.
- Reflect on what you are learning about yourself; does this surprise you?
- Reflect on your feelings and why you think you felt this way.

- Write about things that interest you, puzzle you, make you excited or confused.
- Write about anything you have read / seen which has struck a chord with you or made you angry.
- Write about what you are learning and how this is affecting your youth work.
- Write about any tensions you feel between your personal values and beliefs, what you are learning, your understanding of youth work's values, society's values and the 'received' doctrines of your religious faith.

Chapter Eight investigates student's use of journals in depth and offers a fuller explanation of their purpose within the module.

5.6 Seeing through Students' Eyes: Critical Incident Questionnaires

We all actively construct our experience and attach our own meaning to events. Boud, Cohen & Walker (1993:10) note that *'[w]hile others may attempt to impose their meanings on us, we ultimately define our own experience; others simply do not have access to our sensations and perceptions*.' In enabling young people (and youth work students) to learn from their experiences, the [informal] educator seeks to understand the world of the young person/student and the meaning they attach to their experiences (Schön, 1987; Crosby, 2001; Jeffs and Smith, 2005). Through the activities of youth work and teaching, the young person/student is encouraged to be "*an active participant in a process of shared enquiry' with the worker (Schön, 1983:302) … where the worker's chief concern is to discover and work with the clients meanings*' (Crosby, 2001:59). Brookfield (1995:92) argues similarly about the teaching process;

> Of all the pedagogic task teachers face, getting insides students' heads is one of the trickiest. It is also one of the most crucial. When we start to see ourselves thorough students eyes, we become aware of what Perry (1988) calls the different worlds in the same classroom. We learn that students perceive the same actions and experience the same activities in vastly different ways. If we know something about the symbolic meanings that our actions have for students, we are better able to shape our behaviour so that desired effects are achieved.

He devised the Critical Incident Questionnaire – 'CIQ' – as a way of understanding how students were experiencing both their learning and a tutor's teaching in the classroom,

explaining: '*Critical incidents are vivid happenings that for some reason people remember as being significant (Tripp, 1993; Woods 1993). For students, every class contains such moments and teachers need to know what these are*' (1995:114). The questions are listed below and the full questionnaire is shown in Appendix 2.

> **Critical Incident Questionnaire**
>
> 1. At what moment in the class this week were you most engaged with what was happening?
> 2. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most distanced from what was happening?
> 3. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most affirming and helpful?
> 4. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most puzzling or confusing?
> 5. What about the class this week surprised you the most? (This could be something about your own reactions to what went on, or something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you.)
>
> Brookfield (1995:115)

I used the questions as written, on one side of A4 paper, with spaces in between each question for students' answers. Students handwrote answers at the end of each class onto a sheet with carbon copy paper underneath: they kept the original and gave me the copy, so we each had a record of their responses.

The CIQs offered me immediate feedback on what was going on for students in class, something which the journals did not necessarily do. The CIQs were extremely useful in allowing students to give me anonymous feedback on their experiences in class, enabling me respond to issues of which I might otherwise have been unaware. This also gave me information to share with the class about the class process and how students were experiencing it. The CIQ responses have not played a large part in this research in terms of value formation, but have been useful in providing data on the role of the teacher in the teaching and learning process.

This section has explored the rationale for the decisions I made in designing the curriculum for the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination module. The methods chosen aimed to support students in developing their ability to firstly reflect on themselves, to gain a deeper insight into 'who they are', and how their identity and socialisation have shaped their values development; and secondly to offer space for critical reflection on and evaluation of their

values and on youth work's anti-oppressive value positions in the light of theory. I outlined in detail the paired learning method used in the module, alongside the use of journals and the Critical Incident Questionnaire and explored the theory supporting these choices. The final section of this chapter introduces the students who took part in the main body of the research – the interviews.

5.7 Introducing the Core Participants

The following section offers a brief pen-picture of the core group of students (Group B) who participated in the interview element of the research. This group comprised four students in their first year of study and two in their second year. There were initially more students in the first year, but they either moved to different (non-youth work) courses or had taken Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination as an elective and were not youth work students. The students have been assigned pseudonyms and their 'youth work biographies' are organised alphabetically by name. Each biography covers the following information in order, as follows:

1. Personal details (including their age at the first interview)
2. Previous experience in youth work prior to the course
3. What drew the students into youth work and what kept them engaged/motivated in youth work
4. Whether they had a particular reason for choosing to study at this college
5. The context of their two-year main student placement

5.7.1 Cate – First Year

Cate was female, aged 20 and British. She described her nationality, but she did not describe her ethnicity, which I would describe as white. Cate came to the course with over three years voluntary youth work experience within the pentecostal church she had grown up in, starting at an 'apprentice level' as a small group leader, and then becoming 'a youth leader'. As well as experience in that church context working with young people attending the church, she had also worked in schools (as part of the church outreach team) and in a 'community club' on a Saturday morning, where local young people could drop-in and have breakfast. Her university youth work main placement was at this pentecostal church.

Cate was drawn into youth work through a desire to help young people as a result of the benefit she had received herself, in her adolescence, from a supportive youth worker;

> *He kept telling me that I needed to believe in myself, and he said that he could see [in] me the things that I couldn't see in myself. He showed me that he could see it, and him and his wife were a real support to me and when I didn't believe in myself or have a lot of confidence, he helped me.* ***Cate, Interview 1***

This led her to the point of wanting to support other young people in the same way she had been supported, '*making a difference in their lives*' and being '*a positive example*'. Her desire to '*see young people become more of what they could be*' and witnessing increased confidence in a young woman she had been working with motivated her to be involved in youth work.

Cate chose to study youth work in order to '*gain more experience and be more qualified … so that when I leave here…. I can do youth work in a more professional way so that I can help young people better by the way I've learned and things. And to learn from other people … [who] have got a lot more experience than me*.' She did not explicitly say why this particular course, and whether the Christian element of the course and the theological training was important to her.

Cate's main youth work placement was at the pentecostal church in which she grew up, and where she had gained all her youth work experience – working with children and young people from within the church and, through open clubs, those not attending the church from within the local community.

5.7.2 Dani – Second Year

Dani was female, aged 20 and described herself as white British. As a result of devout parents, she had always been brought up in church and Sunday school and was put in a leadership role at the age of twelve. Most of her prior youth work experience was with a group of churches in her home town, setting up events for young people, helping run drop-ins, leading on a Christian discipleship course with her peers, and leading a youth worship band. She described her experience as being predominantly with 'un-churched' young people, seeking to bring them into church, and in discipling Christian young people. She had also been a peer-mentor at school.

Dani spoke enthusiastically and often of her love of youth work and being *'inspired by the need'* she perceived young people had. Her early involvement in 'leading' young people at the age of 12yrs was driven by her concern for her friends, her perception that they needed a role model and help in forming their identity:

> *sometimes church didn't provide that in terms of where they were at.... so I thought they needed an older, even just two years older, just a person that could get alongside them and I think what's driven me to do youth work is the relationship building with all the youth and really tackling who they are and their identity and helping them and pulling them through and then associating that to like faith-based work.* ***Dani, Interview 1***

Dani had a strong sense that the Christian faith and [some] churches had positive assets to offer young people, but she believed there needed to be a bridge between the two to facilitate access; *'so having a Christian youth worker and being out there among them, like not in a church setting.... because [at the age of 13] I knew that that was what they needed.'* She was very clear she wanted to be involved in Christian based youth work and that she therefore needed a degree and JNC qualification to support this. The college was the nearest to her family home, so it was a pragmatic decision on her part to attend, although she also explained she felt 'led' to this decision, as she knew something of the general area in which it was located and had contacts in the conurbation.

Dani's main placement was with a group of churches around the conurbation, offering her *'a lot of diversity in youth work'* which she enjoyed. This involved offering learning support in a school, running a youth drop-in and doing some detached work, setting up and running a youth club at another church in a deprived area, leading Sunday School and a youth discipleship group.

5.7.3 Jamie – First Year

Jamie was male, aged 20 and white. As a young person, Jamie had regularly taken part in a local 'summer holiday bible camp' – twice as a participant and then twice as a junior leader. He had been fulfilling a 'leading' role in youthwork for over 2 years - starting when he took a gap year out, working in a drop-in centre attached to a church in his home town, working with 'unchurched' young people from a more deprived part of the town, purely on a *'relational basis'*, a term used in Christian youth work to refer to work where the primary

focus was to build purposeful relationships with the young people for their benefit, rather than to tell them 'the Gospel'. Jamie also co-ran a Saturday night Christian event aimed at unchurched young people. He had completed a three-month international internship at a 'mega-church' abroad, where he worked with children from the church. The following year, he gained paid employment in a non-youth work related job and voluntarily ran a weekly bible study for older teenagers, before returning, over the summer, to volunteer with the same church abroad, that time with more of a leadership role. Apart from the internship abroad, all of Jamie's youth work experience had been in the same town.

Jamie came to youth work through a sense of calling which prompted him to make a fairly significant change of direction. At the end of his schooling, Jamie had secured a place at university to study a science subject, having always been a science/maths person at school, but had opted to take a year out because he '*had that unrest about it'*. During his gap year, as well as doing youth work, he did a weekly bible study course with other local young adults, which caused him to think about '*what God really wanted me to do and how He wanted to use my gifts and abilities'*. Jamie, with support from others, came to the conclusion that he was '*more of a people person and God really wanted me to use my abilities to reach out to people. Who 'people' were, I didn't know at the time'*. Whilst on his internship abroad, Jamie described having what he considered a 'light switch in my head' moment about 'youth work!' – the 'people' he should be reaching out to were 'young people'. This led to some fairly difficult discussions for Jamie with his friends and parents about changing university course, requiring him to defer for a second year. He described this time as scary but exciting.

As a result of his gap years and developing a strong sense of calling into youth work and youth ministry, Jamie looked for youth work degree courses through the UCAS website and came across this college's course. He attended the college open day a month later and liked the small, community feel of the college campus where '*everyone knows each other and you can just pick up a conversation with anyone really'*. The importance Jamie placed on relationships became apparent through his interviews.

Jamie's two-year main placement had been arranged for him by the college, working with a church in the local conurbation, which he said looked great on paper but was a *'little bit underwhelming'* when he arrived. In placement he was involved with co-leading a 'cell-group' – a bible-based programmed discussion group with young people from the church; and leading the younger teenagers' bible study on a Sunday morning as part of the regular

Sunday service. Jamie commented that this was not the kind of youth work he had been used to doing – '*there's no environment to hang out and get to know the young people because …. they don't have their own building…so they don't have a traditional youth club or drop-in centre'*. Most of Jamie's placement work was with churched young people whereas he was more used to working with young people who did not attend church on a more relational basis: he found it difficult that the church youth work was very programmed, leaving no space for more informal or spontaneous work.

5.7.4 Laura – First Year

Laura was female, aged 20 and described herself as white British. She had been involved in youth work as a young person: in her school Christian Union, where she gave talks to her peers; twice at a large, denominational Christian festival, where she (along with her youth group) led presentation-style sessions and small group work sessions for her younger peers.

Laura came to her studies with nearly a years' previous experience as a gap-year youth worker, working abroad in a local church in a European town, along with two other gap-year students from that country, doing schools work and youth work.

Laura attributed her involvement in youth work to the activity-leading she had done, aged 14-15 years old, at the Christian festival, and conversations with others, which prompted her to seriously consider getting involved in some form of Christian work. From there, she sought to get as much experience as she could, working with her own church and on a two-week placement in Year 12 at another church in a different town, followed by her gap-year in a European town abroad.

Laura considered two options for university study, both in Christian 'confessional' contexts, with a mix of theological and youth work education and placement experience. She opted for the course at this college because of the greater weighting of weekly study in university compared with placement experience, which she felt would give her more of a 'student' experience; rather than a course that offered almost full-time youth work placement experience with fortnightly study days. In discussing whether studying youth work in a faith-based context was important to her, Laura revealed:

> *… studying youth work was a means to an end. And I didn't know whether I would be passionate about studying youth work because it sounded like an odd thing. I'm*

> *obviously passionate about working with young people, but studying youth work? I just didn't have any clue what that would involve or what I would learn or how can you make something like that in theory, […] I think the theology was kind of the draw and then the youth work was the professional bit - getting a job. And then I went to [visit X youth work course] and realised that actually there was a lot more to youth work and that actually the theory was really helpful and that kind of thing, than maybe I'd first realised. But I still wanted to do it in a faith context.* ***Laura, Interview 1***

Laura's two-year main placement had been arranged for her by the college in a church within the local conurbation of the college. She did not describe this in great detail in the first interview.

5.7.5 Samuel – First Year

Samuel was male, aged 39 and described himself as black British. His involvement in youth work started as a boy, participating in a uniformed organisation, which offered him progression routes into voluntary 'youth leadership' positions as a senior member and then as an adult, which he maintained for many years. After moving to another city, he sought out further voluntary work, with a community-based youth project, attached to a local church, in a deprived inner-city area, where he helped set up small, community events for children and families in partnership with the council and police, as well as working with young people. Samuel's views changed as a result of this experience:

> *It was quite inspirational for me because traditionally I would have had the mindset of being very evangelical and stuff like that, but it helped me look at things from a different point of view, and working with different people, you know, and the Anglican church and the culture round that and everything it was a good experience for me.* ***Samuel, Interview 1***

Samuel made a significant move from an established career as a health care professional to go back to university to train as a youth worker / youth minister. He attributed this to '*responding to a calling which I've had for years and a lot of people have told me but I've just tried to ignore'*, which included two church leaders inviting him to be part of the leadership team and to train for ministry. Having identified and enrolled on the degree course at this college, his financial concerns about student loans were allayed when someone offered to pay his three-year course fees.

Samuel spoke a great deal about his youth work experience, interweaving his thinking about youth work with his ideas of faith. He spoke with real fondness of his voluntary work experience in a small inner-city youth project: the relationships he was able to make with '*not the most easiest kids you could deal with*' and the compassion he felt for them was a key factor in his becoming more involved in working with young people. He was strongly aware of need and his desire to meet this need and work for greater social justice – telling a story about how shocked he was on realising that a seven year old child could not read the writing on children's stickers they were giving out at a community event, and then considering young people's experience of support networks: *'I see a lot of people now sometimes – especially the males – a lot of them don't have a lot of positive male figures or males around them, and I think sometimes they do need some adult interaction with them.'* He saw his own experience growing up and navigating the challenges he faced as a black young person in a deprived inner-city context as a strength he had to offer young people: helping them channel their '*energy [arising from] social deprivation …. in the right direction'*.

In talking about his past experience, Samuel outlined what became a recurring theme for him through the interviews: the relationship between his faith and his work.

> *When I did my first voluntary experience in [inner-city youth project], a lot of kids were very interested to find out what was different from a Christian youth worker and a youth worker, and I used to get called out "You're not a youth worker, Samuel. You're a Christian." And I just used to … I just loved the interaction with these kids, knowing that they all had dreams and wanted to be footballers or wanted to do something different which could transform their estate, you know, because I thought there must be more to life than that. And I just thought that's what being a Christian is about. You engage with people. It's not … It's not about being perfect. That's how God uses everybody is [sic] he works on the imperfections.* ***Samuel, Interview 1***

Samuel spoke thoughtfully about social issues, his faith, his values and his work, and was preoccupied with how these might relate together and possibly coalesce into a Christian 'mandate': *'my mandate as a Christian, how does that fit in, or am I supposed to fit in, or am I compromised? Do I want to offend my funders or something like that?' (Samuel, Interview 1).* He returned to this theme later in the first interview, when thinking about how his own values and his understanding of youth work values related together:

> *Is the modern-day Christian youth worker compromised where their mandate or whatever doesn't have any significance? […] I think what makes me feel uncomfortable*

> *sometimes is, I don't know, I think sometimes I'm worried about being compromised …* ***Samuel, Interview 1***

He thought carefully about what he had to offer as a Christian, where his faith and Christian mandate 'fitted in' and how he might work in community settings in an open, sensitive and inclusive way without '*compromising his faith*'.

Samuel had chosen this particular college as it had a good academic reputation and also had a confessional intention which he hoped would help him, as a person of faith, engage with and work in '*a post-modernistic world*'. His two-year main placement had been arranged for him by the college. He was placed with a group of churches, linked by denomination, and located in diverse demographic areas across the conurbation, although he was predominantly doing youth work in one, inner-urban area, with a local church. By the second interview, Samuel had completed his alternative placement, which he done in schools with a local statutory youth service.

5.7.6 Tom – Second Year

Tom was male, aged nearly 20 at the time of the first interview and described himself as white working class. Having developed through his church's infant and junior Sunday School groups, at the point he was due to move up to the senior's Tom asked, aged 11yrs, if he could stay and help out with the infant and junior groups. The leader agreed and '*got me leading a couple of activities, which was good fun*'. He then went on to help in a mid-week youth group, which he was too old to attend as a participant, but the leader invited him to come along as a helper. He stayed there until he was aged 16, when his family moved church. He got involved in this new church as a participant in the youth work and as a young leader with the children's work, alongside the youth leader.

At the end of his schooling, Tom had a sense he might want to go into Christian youth work.

> *Why youth work? ….. probably because of all that experience in the past. I thought this is something that I identify with and something that I feel I can do […] Part of the reason I wanted to do [youth work] was I wanted to be able to …. change lives of young people.* ***Tom, Interview 1***

Tom spoke about letting young people know they were valued whilst also hoping to change some of the '*quite racist*' attitudes he encountered amongst young people in his main

placement, located in a predominantly white, fairly deprived area, hoping to *'make them think a bit more, even if it's just in passing conversation'* and *'trying to make them think more about why they think like they think'*. Tom wanted to help young people in the best way he could, offering them support, *'just trying to be with them and help them as best I can'*, although at this stage the 'help' was couched vaguely. He began exploring a dilemma, to which he returned throughout the interviews, of wanting to help young people develop ways of acting which promoted their and others' well-being, whilst not forcing or indoctrinating them:

> *I know that I'm very sort of, trying to.... I don't want them to be thinking.... part of me wants them to think in exactly the same way as I think, part of me doesn't want to force feed them and make them believe what I believe.* ***Tom, Interview 1***

Initially, Tom thought the best route in Christian youth work was to gain volunteer experience and then look for paid work: he had not realised youth work was a 'subject' he could train for and qualify in until a he spotted a 'Christian Youth Work' course at a university open day. Encouraged by his youth leader, he attended a large Christian youth work conference, where two regional colleges were advertising their faith-based, university validated, youth work degree courses. He was too young for one of the courses, but this college said his young age was not a barrier, so he signed up for the forthcoming college open day. The visit confirmed his decision to apply: he liked the environment and the look of the course. Once he realised he could train and qualify professionally, it became important to him to do a course with a JNC qualification:

> *I thought the chance to have a JNC qualification and the opportunity to expand my horizons and not be limited to just working within a church setting was really good because I mean part of the reason I wanted to do it was I wanted to be able to affect – be able to change lives of young people as best I could. By getting the best qualifications, it allows you to do that in various ways.* ***Tom, Interview 1***

Tom's two-year main placement had been arranged for him by the college, placing him in a church of his denomination, but one that was much more traditional in churchmanship than he was used to, which he described as 'a bit of a shock'. Although he had been told he had the choice to refuse it as a placement, on his visit, his prospective line manager spoke as if it had already been agreed he would be doing his placement there. Again, like Jamie, he said was not sure what to expect. Whereas his previous experience had been largely with young people who had strong connections with church and faith, at his main placement he was

working with young people from a secular background, not affiliated to the church, which was a complete change for him. As well as working at a regular weekly 'open' youth club, Tom had attended two residentials, set up another weekly issue-based discussion group and undertaken some project work, funded by the local council. The youth work was run by a church volunteer who, in his day job, was employed professionally by a national youth support charity. Tom observed that the church run youth work seemed to operate largely independently of the rest of the church, which led him to feel that at times the church was '*a bit funny*' about the youth work: '*most of the older people didn't really understand the youth work, which has been a bit of struggle at the church. It's been difficult because I've come from a church where they're very open to youth work and see it as an important part.*'

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the context for the case study, outlined the curriculum design of the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination module and introduced the core group of research participants, those in Group B, who were each interviewed three times across the research period.

I explored the rationale for the design choices in relation to the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination module curriculum, drawing upon informal education principles and practices to shape my thinking about the educational approach I took and the teaching and learning strategies I employed. These are congruent with the course methods advocated in the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Youth and Community Work (2017:19) – '*flexible, adaptable, participative, interactive, intersubjective and collaborative in ways that are consistent with the subject area and congruent with informal and non-formal learning*' and which sought to promote critical reflection and reflexivity, particularly in the area of values. I outlined in detail the paired learning method used in the module, alongside the use of journals and the Critical Incident Questionnaire and explored the theory supporting these choices.

It is clear from students' first interviews, that their personal values – around faith, service, love and concern for young people and a desire to meet young people's needs – played a significant role in their choice to become a youth worker. This is explored further in the

following chapter, which examines their values and motives at the start of the research process.

Chapter Six: Value Positions at the Start of the Research Process

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the value positions of the six students, introduced in the previous chapter, at the start of the research process. In it, I outline and analyse students' 'journey' into youth work; what motivated them to undertake youth worker education; how they discussed and described their personal and professional values, their understanding of the connection between them and how values influenced their practice. It reveals the close connection between student's personal values and their youth work practice at this stage, in particular the helpful and unhelpful ways in which their personal values and practice habits shape the relationships they develop with young people. Students demonstrated a concern to fulfil their duty as a youth worker and to perform well, including in discussions of youth work values, where they felt the pressure to 'know' them and 'say the right thing'. This concern often led in practice to instinctive, rather than considered reactions at this stage. The role of emotion in constraining students' ability to act on their values also became apparent.

6.2 Initial Experiences, Influences, Motivations and Values

6.2.1 Experience and influence

All six students came to the course with experiences of youth work, both as young participants and as volunteer junior or adult leaders, all in the context of faith-based work through their own church upbringing (Sunday Schools, bible-study groups or church social groups) or in groups associated with churches, often with young people who would identify as Christian. This experience had significant influence on their desire to engage in youth work, their understanding of the purpose and methods of youth work and it shaped the kind of the worker they themselves wanted to be, as they drew on their own experiences of workers (both as participants and colleagues) whom they admired and respected, or whom they found unhelpful.

Although none of the participants had experience prior to college of youth work in the statutory sector or in an organisation that did not have a faith-based perspective, Samuel, Jamie and Cate had experience of working with faith-based organisations in community settings. In these settings, the faith-basis of the host organisation informed the purpose, process, value-base and world view of their work; however, the content of the work was not necessarily Christian, but was rather about caring and supporting young people through leisure activities. For Samuel, this was in the inner-city youth project attached to a church; Cate worked on behalf of her church in local schools and a community-based club; and Jamie in a 'relational' drop-in, run by his church. At the start of the interview process, Tom also had similar experience through his main placement, which was church-based but seemed to offer a universal-style provision to the young people of the surrounding town, drawing on a more social agenda to inform the work. As a result, these settings had already raised questions for participants about the relationship between their own values (at that stage, similar to the host organisations') and those of the young people they encountered in these particular settings. This is evidenced in Samuel's deliberations about his Christian mandate to share his faith and his concern about compromise; and by Cate in her thinking about how she holds values particular to her, yet recognises young people's values, (explored later in the section 'Whose Values?').

6.2.2 A desire to help

Each student had a strong sense of wanting to help, tied to their own personal experience, although they were not always able to articulate what that help might look like. This echoes the findings of Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000:38-9): in their study, they found new students in professional training held values of concern for people in an '*unformed and uninformed*' way; and that this concern was often given as a reason for choosing to study social work. Tom, Dani and Samuel talked about wanting to meet young people's needs in a general way: Cate wanted to offer to others the kind of support she herself had received. Both she and Laura wanted to help young people reach their potential and *'become more of what they could be'* (Cate, Interview 1). The idea of wanting to be 'of help' and 'of service' is a recurrent theme in many faith-based settings, where there is a strong emphasis on serving God and, frequently, achieving this through serving one's neighbour. This is also true in wider society, where 'meeting young people's needs' and 'helping young people reach their full potential' are well-rehearsed social reasons for engaging in youth work; opinions fuelled by media and policy that depict young people as 'in need', at 'risk' and requiring help and guidance. The

popular view is, left to their own devices, young people are likely to get into trouble (DfES, 2005:5). In both settings, it is frequently the case that: needs are determined by the organisation or funder, rather than in negotiation with the person being helped, particularly with outcomes-driven, funded support; and that help may be offered on a conditional basis, with the power and control in the helping relationship remaining firmly with the workers/ helpers. The uncritical acceptance of this way of working and the power dynamics inherent within it that were habituated in students' practice became a significant theme later in the research, when students sought to apply values of empowerment, free choice and emancipation to their practice habits.

6.3 Thinking about Values

6.3.1 What are values?

Although students' initial definitions of the term 'values' in interview 1 were not always confident or clear, there was a strong sense of familiarity with the 'concept' of values and the importance of values in relation to life and work. Students gave answers such as:

> *So values are something that you hold close to you and that you stand by, and they're kind of like incorporated into morals, and they're something that you really kind of strongly believe in and, you kind of like… it defines who you are.* ***Dani, Interview 1***

> *Erm… I suppose I think - I want to say principles, but I don't think they're quite the same thing. Erm … maybe something that is important that the work you do is based around those things you believe.* ***Laura, Interview 1***

> *For me values is to do with the foundation, what you … it's like a benchmark and to do with ethics, and morals, and stuff like that. So for me it's a standard….. something I value with a high regard.* ***Samuel, Interview 1***

> *I'd say… I mean obviously there's so much differences between values and beliefs. I'd personally describe it as something you hold dear and something … I'd probably describe it best as an idea that's got worth.* ***Tom, Interview 1***

Students grasped the general nature of values – principles, beliefs or standards that have worth and which influence who you are and how you act. Some students were hesitant in giving a definition of the term 'values' and struggled to articulate their thinking coherently,

often drawing on an example of a value to explain themselves. Jamie expressed this struggle at the time as a feeling of 'knowing' but 'not knowing':

> *I guess what…. I mean this is probably where my ignorance will probably show through, because like I'm not, I'm not…I'm only really kind of coming round to this whole way of thinking about things. But I mean values like, just really, kind of what people's opinions of society, I suppose, aspects of society, how people react to situations, social injustice, you know, stuff like that. I'm not really sure. Honestly, I don't really know, like, I guess values are one of those things which you kind of assume. It's like something you know, but you don't know, if that makes sense.* ***Jamie, Interview 1***

Students' later reflections on their initial attempts at answering this question are illuminating. In his second interview, Jamie observed:

> *I guess I didn't really have an answer. I was kind of like 'what do I do with this?' and … you know, trying to clutch at whatever I could really and try to hash something together.* ***Jamie, Interview 2***

Laura commented:

> *I had some idea but I just didn't understand practically quite what it was.* ***[…]*** *I didn't really understand what the word values meant last time you asked me and I was a bit like 'What on earth is she on about?!' It just didn't make sense.* ***Laura, Interview 2***

Although Laura was uncertain about her definition of values as principles, she later talked about her belief that all people are equal, commenting that she sometimes found it '*difficult to live up to that'*, suggesting she saw values as ideals to be realised in practice.

At this stage, two students discussed the idea of values being open to challenge, reflection and critique, both in the context of working with young people's values, rather than their own.

> *If a load of guys are going to say it's okay to call women whores …. I'm saying ….. 'Is that your value?' And I will debate their reasoning about that.* ***Samuel, Interview 1***

> *it's trying to make them think about more the things they take for granted that have been embedded into their life because of their culture and sort of trying to teach them why do they think about their culture that way.* ***Tom, Interview 1***

This echoes thinking that students evidenced early on, understanding their role as trying to regulate young people's behaviour to a standard set by adult workers, an idea which becomes more important through the study.

6.4 Personal Values

Cate, Tom, Dani and Samuel were at ease describing their personal values and giving examples of what this might look like in practice for them, whereas Jamie and Laura struggled and needed more support to work out how to frame and think about their personal values. Participants' personal values were clearly (and unsurprisingly) influenced by their faith positions as practising Christians. All students talked explicitly about the importance to them of basing their values on 'the Christian faith', Jesus and God, some framing this desire as seeking to live in a way that 'honoured God'. For Laura this meant '*loving God and loving people*'; for Cate, being '*shaped by Jesus and the Bible'*; for Dani, being '*a witness through action, word and deed'*; for Jamie it was allowing God to '*really use me to my fullest extent*'; and for Samuel, '*showing a bit of love …. and humility'*.

These five students closely linked their faith to how they related to other people and the way they thought about treating others. They either started from a statement about the importance of their faith position, moving to the impact this had on their actions in relation to others: or they started by stating the importance to them of 'relationships' and then described their approach to these as arising from their faith position and embodying their Christian values.

> *Jesus is massively important to me and like the Bible and things like that can very much shape my values and my beliefs. …. So I think - something that's really important to me is love, in that everything I do, I do it out of love. So when I'm speaking to young people or in any youth work I do, I try and do it out of love and like … that I'm not…. that I'm slow to anger and different things like that, that come out of love because I think that's what young people need; they need people to show them love and that somebody cares for them.* ***Cate, Interview 1***

> *So my values are to totally build sound relationships with youth, friends, parents, and to really get on with anybody, and […] my heart is kind of just to reach out to the kind of people that are different from me as well that have kind of gone through [difficult] situations that I haven't gone through […] I really feel there's a need and I have so much*

compassion for people that have gone through that situation and I love to be able to kind of relate, but support them, encourage them, and just to really build them up, I mean that's just my heart and obviously that's incorporated in my Christian views and Christian faith. ***Dani, Interview 1***

Well, okay. I would value relationship for example like. I would nearly always put relationship with other people and with young people kind of above a lot of things really …… Things like relationships and community, its always…. a lot of these things I've kind of developed by myself and kind of what I've read in the bible and stuff, like those kinds of things. I guess it's what I'm like as well because, you know, I value relationships with people….. ***Jamie, Interview 1***

These participants evidenced two elements to their thinking on how they related to others:

- how their faith led them to treat others, eg. with love, kindness, patience, humility, getting alongside others, caring, helping, attending to others' needs, including those left out / on the margins, being open and welcoming to those from different backgrounds and seeking to resolve conflicts; and
- how their faith shaped their view of others; they saw people (young people in particular): as '*having potential*' (Cate, Laura and Dani); as having inherent worth and value, hence the imperative '*to love people for being themselves*' (Laura and Samuel); that all people are equal (Laura); and that '*everyone has something to offer*' (Cate).

Cate and Jamie listed 'community' as a value – this being a way of offering help and support to others, gaining strength together and, in Jamie's case specifically, a way of sustaining him on his newly found spiritual journey through being with like-minded people. Samuel took this further, talking about social justice, liberation from oppression and transformation as strongly held values of his, drawing on his own upbringing and experience as a black young man growing up in an inner-city setting, and having experienced disadvantage, prejudice and discrimination. Jamie reflected on growing up in a divided community, talking about his dislike of conflict and how this shaped his ongoing approach to relationships:

I'm very involved in kind of reconciliation, I hate, I don't really like confrontation. I don't like holding grudges against people and other people holding grudges against me. I try very much to stay to what it says in Romans 12, about living at peace with all people as much as possible, you know. That's probably another reason why I try and have some kind of relationship with everyone as much as possible. So yes, that's probably where that comes from. ***Jamie, Interview 1***

Tom, whilst explaining his reason for becoming and remaining involved in youth work, drew on his main placement work as illustration, frequently mentioning his desire to help and support people and his engagement in 'relational' youth work, a style of work which prioritises the making of purposeful relationships for the benefit of young people. He said:

> *my values .... with [the youth club] are just relational work, just getting to know them and letting them know that they're valued.... just making relationships and trying to identify ways that we can create projects and stuff for them to get involved in that will help them.* ***Tom, Interview 1***

When asked about his personal values, Tom reflected on what could be described as his personal 'moral' stances, citing, as influences, his school social education lessons – in relation to his anti-alcohol and anti-smoking stances – and his church-based upbringing and the bible-based Christian beliefs of his family – in relation to his no swearing (specifically blaspheming) stance. He discussed his strongly held belief of 'no sex before marriage', but could not remember his family ever telling him this, nor hearing it in church, nor reading about it in the bible. This is a fairly common conservative Christian view of sexual ethics and demonstrates the unconscious enculturation and pre-course learning students bring to their youth work education.

Tom noted that this last value was one he brought to his youth work, but reasoned through how he might work with young people who did not share this value:

> *I admit that I'd rather help [young people] take precautions if they're going to do it anyway, but try and sort of say "Why are you going to do it? Is it that important?" and then ... and quite often I find myself ... I remember one lad who said "I'll just literally say I'm saving myself for marriage". He said, "I just don't want sex." And I applauded him for that. I said that's a good thing because you want to be keeping yourself ... I can't remember the reasons that I gave, but I didn't go into the whole Christian thing but I tried to keep it like it's a sensible thing to do because you don't ... It's better when you know you're in a stable relationship and that's the place where it's meant to happen.* ***Tom, Interview 1***

When expanding on what they identified as personal values, participants frequently talked about their work with young people as illustrations of how they realised their values in action, demonstrating the close link and influence between their personal values and their youth work practice at this stage (see Cate's comment above on her outworking of her value

of love). Having identified 'relationships' as a personal value, Dani was asked to expand on what this 'value' might look like in practice:

> *So in my youth work I've used, like, relationships in terms of mentoring, so I'd kind of like help people along, kind of needs and situations that they're going through family issues, or anger issues, or sex, drugs, whatever, so that's kind of relationship mentoring in a sense. And then in youth work as well like the relationships I build with the team that I work with is really important, like whether you take that leadership role or not you're still part of a team, and to build like sound relationships, I think, with the team where you can support them and make them grow in their youth ministry or make them see , kind of like, how to do this, that and the other in youth work.* ***Dani, Interview 1***

Similarly, Samuel offered examples of his personal values 'in action' with young people:

> *I have challenged young people, quite rightly so. I can give you an example. It's like something potentially fatal for some young people who are going to fight another gang. And I says "Well, if you die tonight" or something like that "where's your parents going to be? What good are you dead" and stuff like that. You had to make them think. I said this is the outcome of this behaviour. You're going to damage your family and somebody else's family, and more or less breaking it down, you know "Is this your contribution to society?"* ***Samuel, Interview 1***

Much of the participants' discussions about their personal values in the first interview came out in the earlier discussions of their journey into youth work and their motivations for staying in youth work, as well as in the specific question about personal values. This evidenced the already strong link between their personal values and their work with young people, the approaches they took to building relationships and the behaviour they endorsed. For these students, one can read that being a youth worker and working with young people was a way to realise their personal value commitments and sense of vocation.

6.4.1 Vocation and personal involvement and commitment

Student's expressed their sense of vocation in various parts of the interview, either explicitly, or through the passion and care with which they spoke about youth work and young people and how it was more than 'simply a job' to them.

> *having [helped lead at X Christian Festival] the first year, I realised I was really passionate about it and I thought actually maybe I'm interested in doing some kind of Christian work. And then I was just talking it through with people and one or two people*

said "have you thought about youth work?". And I just prayed about it and just felt that that's what God wanted for me. ***Laura, Interview 1***

So I think the change for me is that I'm just responding to a calling which I've had for years and a lot of people have told me but I've just tried to ignore. ***Samuel, Interview 1***

I had been called into youth work and youth ministry…… I was kind of in church one day and I was like, okay, right, it was like a light switch in my head, and I was like, you know, youth work, reaching out to young people …… ***Jamie, Interview 1***

By loving doing youth work and it being a passion rather than a job, you value it more and you're more joyful in doing it and so the young people can pick up on that because they can see that you're not just doing this for money or because it's a job to do, but that you really care about doing it. ***Cate, Interview 1***

6.4.2 Personal inclination and disposition

Along with an awareness of 'calling', which gave students a sense of wider purpose and meaningful engagement in youth work, students also talked in the first interview about their passion for the work and personal attributes or dispositions that made working with young people 'more natural' to them.

Cate talked about being a '*pastoral person, so I naturally … want to help people and care about them and want to them to be the best they can be'* (Cate, Interview 1). Dani said: '*I just love making new friends. I love being so sociable…. I mean if you didn't have that in your personality you wouldn't be able to drive the youth work that, you know, that you're established in'*. For Jamie, a significant factor in his journey from science into youth work was the recognition that he was much more of a '*people person'* than a scientist. Samuel was aware he had always had '*compassion for young people, in that I think what's lacking sometimes with young people is sometimes they don't always have adults to communicate with*' and this enabled him to enjoy working with young people that others found particularly challenging. Tom said:

I suppose that's where my youth work has always come from, has been wanting to help people…… I've always found that I personally don't like being left out of things and I always like to be with friends and stuff like that, and I've always found it difficult when there's not been, so I've always made sure that … and maybe because of my Christian beliefs but I'm not sure, that no-one is left out. ***Tom, Interview 1***

This sense of wanting to include, in part as a consequence of personal experience / inclination, was important to Jamie too. Later, when discussing youth work values, he disclosed:

> *I've always been the person who will kind of try and notice, like, the people on the fringes and try and bring them in, you know, like people who are maybe sitting on their own or are not doing much, I try to get them involved in what's happening. I've always been like that, well, since I've been involved in youth work because I probably see myself in those people because that's what I used to be like.* ***Jamie Interview 1***

Like Samuel's commitment to justice, which re-emerged a number of times through the interview process, Tom's and Jamie's concerns for inclusion were a personal theme to which they both returned frequently.

6.4.3 Whose values?

Cate, Samuel and Tom, when discussing their own values, began to think how their own values impacted their work and approach to working with young people. They clearly believed in the worth of their value positions, and wanted to share these with young people, but had begun to wrestle with how to do that with integrity and without forcing young people to believe uncritically what they believed.

> *I think it's important that youth workers don't become another figure of telling young people what to do but they go on a journey with them and try and help them discover things as well… […] I think the most important thing is the young person themselves, and not my - I don't know, …. I don't know how to explain it, but it's not really about me but about that young person themselves, but yet, that I have values that I hold that…. there are some values that I hold that are important to me and I would not go outside of, but yet, within that … […] there's different young people who need to be treated in a different way, because they are all individuals and I think if you try and categorise them or say "this is for all young people", then you're not seeing their individual needs and who they.* ***Cate, Interview 1***

Samuel and Tom also discussed their awareness of this balance in their own practice.

> *I'm about social justice, you know, and just seeing what's … forget about the colour of somebody's skin and [just seeing] what's in the heart. And I believe in transformation as well, but that … I believe not forcing your opinion on people but I believe in liberation, all that kind of stuff, and equality and stuff.* ***Samuel, Interview 1***

It's an interesting one because I know that I'm very sort of, trying to. …I don't want them to be thinking…. part of me wants them to think in exactly the same way as I think, part of me doesn't want to force feed them and make them believe what I believe. ***Tom, Interview 1***

The balance between sharing and educating but not forcing or telling became an important recurring theme for participants later in the research journey. Resolving this dilemma was significant for students in their understanding of working with people's value positions and in their own development of their professional values (Freire, 1972).

6.5 Youth Work Values

Students demonstrated varied levels of confidence at this stage in answering the question about youth work values; their answers both reflected generic values in youth work (often drawn from their own experiences in youth work) and evidenced confusion over the broad use of the term values in youth work (and more generally) to encompass values, principles, standards, purposes, outcomes and functions/methods of youth work, as reflected in the uses of the term in youth work literature and the diversity of settings in which youth work is practiced.

In answering this question, Tom and Dani – the two second year students – immediately made reference to the 'NYA' (National Youth Agency) standards and 'Every Child Matters' (DfES, 2003), a Labour Government policy initiative around children's and young people's well-being, both of which they had learned about in their first year of the course. However, they spoke with some reservation about their own understanding of them. Dani began by referencing Every Child Matters (2003), alongside the 'National Association' (referring to the National Youth Agency).

Dani: *So there's like, erm, Every Child Matters, and National Association kind of you know… erm .. values, so there's kind of like valuing them, and listening to them, being an advocate for them, not discriminating, accepting who they are, building up their knowledge, and supporting them, building a team, encouraging their leadership. I think that's all National Association youth ministry stuff or youth work standards. I think that's what it's called, yeah.*
Researcher: *You're pulling a face there. [Laughs] What's the face about?*

> ***Dani:*** *[Laughs] I just should know this after doing a year of youth work. It should be on the flick of …[tails off]*

Both referenced a solid mix of elements listed as both 'values' and 'functions' in the Youth Work National Occupational Standards (NOS) (LSIS, 2012). Dani's felt pressure to 'perform well' and 'know this' after a year of youth work, and both her and Tom's reticence in 'listing' the values, was later mirrored by other students in subsequent interviews.

As examples of youth work's professional values, first year participants offered answers such as: listening, giving young people a voice, being young person centred, supporting them where they are, being empowering and participative, challenging oppressive behaviour; all of which could be mapped onto parts of the NOS values for youth work. Students also gave some answers framed as qualities of a 'good' or 'professional' youth worker, eg. being someone who was reliable and trustworthy, someone to whom young people could look up to, a good role model; again, evidencing that their conception of youth work was not only a function of work, but was 'relational', and involved the personhood of the worker, particularly as a person of integrity and virtue. This is not unusual in the Christian circles in which these students moved and the confessional and formational nature of the college at which they were studying. The students linked these understandings to their own positive and negative experiences of youth work, both as workers and young participants; demonstrating some prior ability to reflect on, critically evaluate and learn from experience.

Cate began by stating '*one [value] is to kind of go on a journey with a young person'* and talked about the importance of listening. She followed this with a nuanced statement about the kind of 'detachment' a professional youth worker might be able to offer a young person.

> *[Young people] have got so many different figures or different people who have different roles in their life, to be another person that they can go to and understand that you've not got any attachment to them, …. that you're just interested in them and listening to them, rather than - because it doesn't show anything about you if - I don't know, I know what I mean but I can't explain it. I think, as an example, sometimes young people will maybe pick up from a teacher if they do bad or good that it's a reflection on the teacher, so they might not always feel open to them, but as a youth worker you're away from that, in a way.* ***Cate, Interview 1***

Samuel talked about work being '*centred around the young person, not specifically what you think. It's supporting them where they want to be as well*' and drew on his previous clinical

training in social care to discuss the idea of 'reading behind' a young person's challenging behaviour;

> *So how he presents with his behaviour – I'm being a bit clinical now – he's, I thought "He's rude and x, y and z" but behind that he might be saying "Samuel, I need some space, or this has happened to me.... I know it's not right but this is how I express myself. Can you see where I'm coming from? Will you give me a bit of time to engage?" And that means sometimes you have to step out of your own box to see that which is very challenging for you as well.* ***Samuel, Interview 1***

Laura said she had learned about empowerment as a youth work value through reading *Informal Education* (Jeffs & Smith, 2005), in which various values in youth work are discussed. However, empowerment was the only value Laura recalled, perhaps as a result of her personal struggle with it.

> *The one that's coming into my head is empowering young people, because when I first came across that as a youth work value - I was reading a book on informal education - I wasn't quite sure what that meant or whether that was a value I should hold, or... I think that was a confusing one for me to start off with..... I think at the time it was maybe in a context of other people shouldn't be deciding for young people what's good for them and that was a difficult dilemma for me, because part of me wanted to say "but what if I do know what's better for that young person than them?". Erm, and .. yeah, so, that was quite a difficult one. At the same time, now I realise it's of much more value for the person to arrive at that point where they are empowered than it is for you to make decisions for them. But that took a lot of thinking.* ***Laura, Interview 1***

When asked about other values she had learned about, she replied:

> *Youth work values? Again, similar things to some of my values about equal opportunities and things like that..... Erm... ah... [pause] I really don't know. I think I've looked a lot at the kind of sheet of youth work values and that's been interesting, just going through it and seeing what that says, but I can't remember any more of those [Laughs]. I'm not sure really.* ***Laura, Interview 1***

Jamie had learned about participation through an Open College Network course he had undertaken on his year out.

> *Well, participation would be a massive one and kind of inclusion. That was something that was drilled into me. It's like pretty much the only thing I can remember from my year out because we did an introduction to youth work course, which was like equivalent to a GCSE. I'm just like, trying to think of the words, like I've always been the*

person who will kind of try and notice like the people on the fringes and try and bring them in. ***Jamie, Interview 1***

What is interesting in each case is that students remembered or spoke about youth work values that had a particular personal resonance with them, as Laura and Jamie demonstrated above. Cate and Samuel also evidenced this: Cate described youth work as a journey between worker and young person four times in her first interview, in answers to three different questions, and she re-iterated it at the end of the interview; and Samuel talked about the youth work values of non-oppression and liberation – themes from his personal values, which connect with youth work.

In summary, the second year students appeared eager to evidence the college teaching about professional values, by making reference to the NYA, Youth Work NOS and other policy documents, but struggled to expand further on them with coherence. Connected to this, Dani specifically expressed her feeling of 'pressure to know' and perform appropriately as a 'professional', even at this early stage of the interview process. All the values mentioned by the students as youth work values were consonant with those listed in the Youth Work NOS, although not expressed in the way outlined in the NOS; some students had learned these values through reading or training, others had assimilated them through practice and reflection on practice. The youth work values cited in almost all cases had a personal resonance with the participants – either because they particularly struggled to assent to them or enact them; or because they reflected values that the participants already strongly held themselves.

6.6 Connection between Personal and Professional Values

The majority of students felt there was a good 'fit' between their personal values and those of the youth work profession. This was most strongly felt by those students who were newer to the course with less life experience, namely Cate, Laura and Jamie. Those students with more training, youth work and life experience, namely Samuel, and to a lesser extent Tom and Dani, expressed some concern about the 'fit' and an awareness of where there may be value tensions and ethical dilemmas for their practice.

Cate, Jamie and Laura found consonance between their own values and their understanding of youth work values, having recently made the decision to study youth work at university. This is not surprising: someone who felt no affinity with the values of youth work, and who did not think they could at least make a competent youth worker would be unlikely to opt to train for this role. Jamie believed that as youth work prioritised relationships, the importance he accorded to relationships would suggest his values and youth works' sat together 'comfortably'. Where he believed he needed to develop was in his approach to planning and programming more formal youth work, which he was currently finding very difficult. It was his preference to engage in more informal types of youth work and he was beginning to realise he could not 'just wing it'. As Jamie discussed this, it appeared this was less about a clash of values and more about fulfilling 'professional responsibility' and ensuring his personal preferences did not negatively affect his ways of working and developing himself as a rounded youth worker.

Cate felt there was nothing in her experience up to that point which pointed to any conflict of values, but, like Dani, she was aware that there may be some issues, for example, pregnancy and abortion, which could present her with more of a personal value dilemma. However, also like Dani, she was clear about what her role as a youth worker would be in that situation:

> *if a young person was saying they were pregnant and they wanted an abortion, that goes against my beliefs, but yet I'm saying that my value as a youth worker is to go on a journey with them and to help them…… as a youth worker I want to show them ….. that I'm there for them to do anything with them no matter what their decision.* ***Cate, Interview 1***

> *I was sitting in a science class and they'd say stuff that's controversial to my faith about evolution or whatever and that's been kind of like a personal [conflict] ….. so for me to hold values that are different, you know, that's besides the point. I think that if you're there as a youth worker, you're there for the youth, so your personal kind of values only get challenged if you are the one that's having to teach that, you know, but you just help them in their understanding and education, I think, so it's not much of a problem.* ***Dani, Interview 1***

Dani discussed how the setting impacted her thinking on how she responded in school, acknowledging '*I think you kind of put different hats on in a certain sense, like you'll be able to say things in a youth drop in that you can not say in a school environment*'. She was eager to

emphasise that the youth worker should be guided by the priority to meet young people's needs, whilst understanding the context they were working in.

Similarly to Dani, Tom also found that, '*mostly, youth work values sit quite comfortably with my own generally*', but he was very aware of situations he had recently encountered where young people were acting in ways contrary to his beliefs, which caused him to think about how he responded in his role as a youth worker. He talked through various challenging circumstances, (these are explored in more detail in the section on Values in Action), where he was very aware of drawing on safeguarding policy and practice and some of the ethical dilemmas around confidentiality in these situations. Frequently he framed this as policy designed to ensure the protection of workers - talking about exonerating oneself from blame by reporting to one's line manager, taking action to 'cover your back', and the need to 'protect ourselves better' – evidencing his then understanding of the main tenets of safeguarding – to minimise risk to the worker and the agency. However, this approach unsettled him: he was eager not to simply report and walk away, but to continue to support the young person.

> *But they're the sorts of things that I find it really difficult to – with my values – because I really want … I don't like the idea of just saying "That's off my shoulders. I've given it onto the next person." That's something I want to be working through that with that young person.* ***Tom, Interview 1***

Samuel was surprisingly emphatic about the tension he felt between his personal values and professional youth work values, arising from his questions about the role his faith should and could play in his youth work as a Christian youth worker, compared with that of a secular youth worker. This echoed what he said earlier on in the interview, when interrogating his Christian 'mandate', which perhaps reflected the fact he was moving from a professional healthcare setting, where his primary role was not faith-related, to one where he was training in a theological college explicitly as a youth minister/ Christian youth worker. He expressed his discomfort about being compromised in relation to his faith – questioning: if a child asked him about God, would he be allowed to answer this question fully and if he did, would that get him into trouble?. He traced this concern back to a conversation he had had with the project manager of the small inner-city church-established youth project where he had volunteered. On induction, the manager had questioned whether Samuel had an underlying agenda to convert young people. His response was to say '*'No, I'm coming with the love of Christ.' But my answer was, 'If those kids asked about Jesus, would it be a bad thing?*

Should I respond?' Do you know what I mean?' I understood this as Samuel wanting to work out of the fullness of who he was, and what he felt his faith gifted to him, recognising he was training for a role that was more explicitly Christian, even if that role led him into secular settings. This, again, was a recurring theme thoroughout the three interviews for Samuel.

6.7 Values 'in Action'

Students talked about diverse scenarios with differing levels of complexity to illustrate how they were drawing on values in their practice. The more straightforward scenarios focused on one-to-one interventions with young people, from Jamie, Cate and Laura, the younger first year students.

Jamie regularly sought to include a young man who absented himself from a youth group meeting held in his own house, by staying in his room. Jamie deliberately made *'a point of going up there and like letting him know that people care where he is and always inviting him downstairs*,' drawing on his value of including those on the fringes.

Cate discussed a situation with a young woman from the local community who was going through a hard time, acknowledging:

> *I've realised that with her I've really needed to be someone that shows them that I'm there for her no matter what, that if she's going through a good time I'm still there for her and if she's going through a bad time I'm still there for her, and that I'm interested in everything that she's going through.* ***Cate, Interview 1***

She mentioned maintaining boundaries with the girl, but stumbled over how to explain coherently what she meant by boundaries, finally framing this as being a consistent and dependable worker, without creating a dependency in the girl on her support. She was also keen not to show favouritism and to ensure she did not overlook young people in a group – an awareness she traced back to her own teenage experience of being overlooked by adults, she believed due to her shyness. Cate described this experience as 'hurtful', feeling that others were noticed more than she was, as they were louder. This is an example of how a youth worker's prior personal experience can impact the approach they take in their own youth work.

Cate acknowledged some of the struggles she had in her work with young people from the local community: she sometimes felt they were suspicious of, or misinterpreted the workers' professional interest in young people, illustrating this with a story of how young women talked about their crushes on the male workers when they were not around. This led to her being very aware of how she and others *'came across'* to young people *'because in today's society there's the whole child protection thing'*.

Laura discussed a situation with a young woman concerned about being over-weight. Laura sought to balance the young woman's legitimate health concerns with her self-esteem, wanting to communicate to the girl her inherent worth and value whatever her weight – and wanting her to be critically aware of media (mis-) representations of women's bodies, which she felt fostered an unhelpful body image for girls.

Samuel discussed his compulsion to intervene in a situation that arose whilst he was working in school with a group of boys in a drama class, who were 'running rings' around a teacher: *'I said, no, this can't happen, you know, and I had to speak with them'*. His approach was a mix of 'straight' talking to the group about their lack of respect for each other and the teacher and also 'going the extra mile' with them:

> *Now I actually from my own time did some extra sessions with those guys because I knew there was a conflict within the whole team [...] I know sometimes you have to go a little bit the extra mile with these young people because they want to see sometimes that you're genuine.* ***Samuel Interview 1***

Samuel talked about 'challenging' the young men about their behaviour, a word he had used previously when thinking about his youth work and one he went on to use in relation to the case study. Three further examples of work he gave also involved him working with what could be termed 'confrontational' situations: one where young men were going to fight another gang (in which he challenged them to think about the longer-term consequences of their actions for them and their families), another where young people had kicked in a door at the club (where the young people were approached, confessed and it was dealt with appropriately), and one where he had asked the young people to stay behind and help pick up litter, in order to encourage them to own and contribute to the club, which they did and he praised them. I found this interesting, as Samuel consistently displayed a controlled and gentle manner: his approach seemed less one of angry confrontation and more one of a caring but straight-talking older brother / father figure. This is perhaps endorsed by this

postscript to his last two examples: '*I was very touched last week. I actually heard that the kids actually attended. I think they were kind of gathering – the kids attending – there for the interpersonal relationships with the staff rather than just the Wii and the table tennis,*' showing for him the importance of relationships within this work of challenging young people's attitudes and behaviour.

As second-year students, Dani and Tom had been working in their main placement for a year and had a number of practice examples to draw on. Dani talked about a discipleship group, where 'it kicked off' when young people from 'a gang around the corner' came asking to join in, much to the annoyance of the regular members. Dani sought to work with this through including the new group in discussion, challenging the regulars' values, (*'we're Christians and we should accept them')*, and seeking to find areas of commonality between them, to facilitate discussion. The end result *'was kind of a bit conflicty though, because there was a few things that kicked off.'* She talked about seeking to be an advocate for each group, looking to help them understand each other, valuing the young people as individuals and seeking to support and encourage them; and referenced safeguarding as an issue to consider in relation to some of the things disclosed in that discussion. She also talked about a situation where a young woman, well known to the workers, disclosed late in the evening after a youth group meeting, that, after 'a rubbish day', she wanted to go home and commit suicide. Workers were aware of the difficulties this young woman faced and sought to remind her of her personal worth and value to them and her family and friends; to assure her she could get professional help to overcome her difficulties; and to re-frame her negative thinking into positive thinking: *'just to make them see that they were special, that they did have high hopes, they have could achieve something'*. Interestingly, Dani did not frame this explicitly as a significant 'safeguarding' concern, with all the practice implications that might bring, although she did think of it as a 'life and death' situation.

Tom gave many accounts of his actual practice and his approach to youth work throughout the interview – when describing his route into youth work, his placement setting, what motivated him, his personal values and youth work values: in fact, he had already provided and explored so many practice examples, that in the interview I chose not to ask this question due to time constraints and because I felt I already had plenty of examples. Early on in the interview, Tom talked about a situation where he felt young people in his placement were being racist – making fun of an Asian young man attending the club, whom Tom felt was uncomfortable with their joking. The placement's response was to run *'a couple of*

sessions where we've had to say to them, "Look guys, this is not fair to him,"' seeking to educate and challenge young people and manage their behaviour. Discussing how he felt his personal values and youth work values fitted together, Tom started talking about three complicated scenarios, one running into another, which for him highlighted some of his concerns about how his values and youth work values worked together. The first was a young woman who had spoken with Tom, confiding in him that she was self-harming, wanted to leave home and have a baby – during which she also mentioned suicide; the second, a girl not wanting to go home; and the third, a situation he was working through at that stage, where the placement was dealing with rumours that a 17 year-old boy (who did not attend their provision) was seeking to have sex with 13 year-old girls who did attend, with some mention of the girls being forced against their will or being coerced. In the first situation, Tom was very aware of safeguarding procedures, leading him to explore some of the issues he raised in the above section, about his discomfort of simply 'reporting up the chain' to exonerate oneself and the project from any future liability. He then went on to think through issues of confidentiality as the young woman who had confided in him did not want him to tell her mum. On learning the girl had apparently not told anyone else how she was feeling, he said '*Okay, that's going to be a problem for me to keep this secret'*. However, this situation was further complicated by the fact the mum was also well-known to the leaders at the club, as they were all active members of the same church. Tom informed his line-manager of his conversation with the young woman, following organisational safeguarding procedures. As well as seeking to support the young woman, Tom was acutely aware of the struggle her mum was going through, not fully understanding what was going on for her daughter and he experienced this dual knowledge as competing interests: '*it was a bit more personal than it would have otherwise been ….. our priority is wanting to keep her [the girl's] trust, but at the same time I can see that it's eating up her mum inside, so do I tell her mum?*' In this situation, Tom's line manager phoned the young woman concerned to talk to her himself. Tom said:

> *He phoned the girl, and was having a conversation, who said "You have no right! Don't tell my mum." Erm, .. however, because of the situation she wasn't giving away any ground so we still had to tell her mum.* ***Tom, Interview 1***

Tom explained how his line manager had sought to work with the mum to help her use this information wisely with her daughter – essentially not to reveal prior knowledge, but to 'discover it for herself', so the workers did not lose the trust of the young woman. This reminded Tom of the second scenario, where the line manager had acted similarly – going

against the young woman's wishes, without their knowledge, to speak with their parent. Tom wrestled with this:

> *what's the best course of action here? Do I … I mean quite often the case has been we've spoken to the parents, tried to do it as anonymously as possible and the young person has spoken to us afterwards because they've not been aware of some of this. But is that see… well, something I don't … lying .. but not technically lying, but is it lying? And is it a white lie if you're not saying … If you've not said "No, I'm not going to say it" but you sort of … they've assumed you're not going to say it.* ***Tom, Interview 1***

Both these situations illustrate the complexity of working in settings where workers have 'dual roles': for example, being a youth worker in a church, where you are also a church member; or living in the community where you also work, being both youth worker and neighbour. Which role guides their actions at which point? They also demonstrate the impact of placement practice on worker's learning about youth work.

When trying to articulate the values and principles he might draw on with regards to the underage sex concern, Tom first said: '*It's a difficult one because obviously you're working in the beliefs of youth work and trying to work within the beliefs of the Christian faith as well'*, which for him appeared to be the balance between upholding his Christian faith-based value of no sex before marriage, and his perceived understanding of the youth work value, which would be enabling the young people to engage in sex safely. Initially, it appeared the only frame of reference Tom could draw on was one provided by his religious worldview. He demonstrated little experience and practice of engaging in a constructive dialogue between this framework and that of professional youth work. Due to the age gap, he suggested the rumoured situation was 'verging on paedophilia', and although he wanted to ensure any consenting young people had sex safely, he also thought about the youth work value of protecting young people, which he felt complemented his Christian values. It was not until I asked the question about legal issues that Tom framed the situation in a professional way as one of under-age sex. He identified the issue of coercion as '*a whole other issue in itself'*, but did not articulate this as an issue of female consent and rape, as well as under-age sex.

Throughout this section of Tom's interview, there was a strong feeling of him being overwhelmed by these challenging ethical issues. At the point the first young woman confided in him, Tom said '*so I'm thinking "Oh, this is getting a bit much for me"*'. My sense was that Tom believed he was not yet that well-equipped to deal with these issues, and to

engage in ethical debate between his own faith-based worldview and the professional frame of reference of youth work. This meant he struggled to manage his emotions arising from the situations and his own inner turmoil, and consequently he struggled to contain these emotions sufficiently to examine the situation more clearly and calmly. Had he been able to do this, he may have been in a position to better assess the severity of these situations, both in the moment and after, and then to formulate a more useful response in the moment, in relation to his work with the young person and also with himself – to give himself some space to think.

He found the idea of simply having to fulfil policy as '*annoying*' and '*distressing*', because he felt the policy might be more aligned to mitigating the risks for the agency, rather than focussing on supporting and protecting young people. When faced with diverse values around sexual activity and young people's actions (his Christian faith-based values and values around supporting young people to engage in safe sex), he described the process of choosing between which values to act upon as '*one of those constant battles I find myself having'.* In each of these situations, Tom was beginning to engage in ethics work (Banks, 2016:36), seeking to 'do the right thing' for the young person whilst managing his own understanding of his role and moral responsibilities as a Christian, a youth worker and a Christian youth worker, working in a faith-based setting. Ultimately he reconciled them all into an overarching value of his priority to ensure young people's safety, which included educating them about safe sex and providing contraception if required. It was clear that emotion figured significantly for Tom in his accounts of real-life practice situations and his decision-making.

6.8 Espoused Values revealed though a Youth Work Scenario

The final question asked workers what they thought of a situation where a youth worker had seen a young woman with challenging behaviour, recently returned to the youth club, steal sweets from a shop whilst on a trip (see Appendix 3, from Banks, 2010). The youth worker in the scenario did not say anything to the young person, as she was concerned it might damage their developing relationship of trust; however, afterwards she began to worry that it may have come across as if she was condoning the act of stealing.

All participants believed that in that situation the worker should have spoken with the young person, although they framed this in various ways. Cate, Dani, Jamie and Samuel felt compelled to address the stealing with the young woman out of their sense of duty as a youth worker, their need to be accountable and their understanding that the worker was responsible for the young person, albeit, each with slightly different inferences.

Cate: *I think if I'd been in a situation where I hadn't said anything, I'd be thinking about it all the time and be thinking whether I did the right thing and whether it'd have bigger consequences by me not saying anything and letting it go unseen. So, I think I'd see it as my duty, and if I [didn't] then I'd be not being the best youth worker I could be. So, then it would make me feel like I'd not done the job that I should have.*

Dani: *Even though nobody may have noticed, I think still there's a duty as a youth worker, you've still got to challenge the behaviour of the youth..... if you challenge that behaviour it will be more kind of an implement if like you do it in love [sic].*

Samuel: *I've got accountability..... I've got a duty of care as well. So ethically, I think I would have challenged the young person but something which doesn't embarrass them.*

Jamie: *As a youth worker, you know, you have a responsibility over these young people and their development, and I think professionally, I think that kind of behaviour needs to be challenged.*

For Cate, she felt it was her duty to be an ethically virtuous worker – '*being the best I can be'*, for the benefit of the young woman. She understood this to mean seeking to help the young woman understand the potential consequences of her actions and to offer her help. Dani clearly understood her duty as a youth worker to '*challenge inappropriate behaviour'*, talking about the importance of truth within relationships and '*being real*'. She believed that challenging young people's behaviour was beneficial, as it would '*really have an effect on who they are'* – particularly if one could do this '*in love'*. Like Cate, she said she would seek to understand what was going on for the young woman through asking questions. Jamie similarly, although somewhat hesitantly, thought: '*the young woman that steals the sweets probably needs to be challenged about that immediately*,' and went on to explore how he thought that might be done – not '*in front of other people ... not necessarily right after it happened, but as soon as possible and just told her, you know, that wasn't right, you know, don't steal'*, with the aim of not allowing an unhelpful and possibly addictive habit to form. He felt '*the most loving thing to do would be to not condone that and challenge her behaviour*,' like Cate and Dani drawing on a Christian ethic of love (and doing the perceived best for the young person) to frame his choices.

As well as drawing on his understanding of his accountability and duty of care as a youth worker, Samuel approached the situation like Dani, thinking about the importance of truth and consistency as a means of fostering trust within the relationships one establishes with young people, which led him to think '*for me, it doesn't hold any substance if I don't approach that young person. So if I'd seen it and this has actually happened to me, I've actually challenged a young person about that, yes.'* Sam, like Jamie, was worried that this small act of stealing could lead to bigger things and wanted the young woman to understand the consequences of her actions.

Tom's answer is instructive. Although his initial response was to talk of challenging the young woman, he then stopped himself mid-sentence, going on to say '*I thought I knew exactly what I'd do, but now thinking about it again I'm not sure*.' He initially judged the worker's response as 'wrong', but as he reflected he wondered whether it was 'that wrong' to let it pass, bearing in mind the status of the relationship. Tom again wrestled with various options, what he called having 'internal debates', as he thought through possible options in this scenario and their merits – including: whether the relationship could withstand such an intervention; whether he could leave it until a point when the relationship was stronger; whether, if he said nothing, it would tacitly be condoning theft; and whether there would *be* another chance to discuss it if he said nothing. '*If you don't mention anything now, you might not get the chance again, which is one of the things that I struggle with, because youth work is quite often a gradual process.'* This led Tom to ruminate over a situation at his placement where a young man had been attending regularly and then had suddenly stopped coming. '*If you don't get the chance now to mention it*,' he wondered, '*is it … there doesn't seem to be that there is a straightforward answer that I can honestly say that …*'.

Tom described his hopes for leaving an intervention until later: '*that we'd be able to talk through it and so work out the why she feels the need to do it and gradually go through and hopefully, sort of, help her to realise that that's not a right way of doing things.'* As he sought to explain this more fully, he began to draw on a real life situation where he had made a snap judgement about something he overheard incorrectly, where he went in with an immediate adversarial 'challenge', resulting in the young man storming off. Rather than pursue it there and then, he waited until the following week, where he and the young man were able to have a calmer conversation about the situation and Tom was able to apologise for acting on incorrect information. He explained:

> *I've been prone to making the immediate sort of… challenge to that behaviour and stuff like that, but through experience of working with other youth leaders and especially my time working with [alternative placement], I've learnt that quite often you need to let things go, just let them go, when situations … I was running a session on my own, challenged a young person. He started cursing and swearing and went … walked off. He came and said sorry later, but if I'd gone and chased after him it wouldn't have been appropriate then. So it's something I've been learning.* ***Tom, Interview 1***

This episode begins to reveal the difficulty of understanding one's value judgement about a situation and understanding how to work effectively with young people around such issues. Tom's fledgling understanding of his own practice and what he described as his 'instinct reaction', in this case to 'challenge', combined with his learning from previous practice experience about how his 'instinct' propelled him to act and the result of this action, began to re-shape his thinking about how he might, *in practice*, actually work in a more effective way with this situation. Listening to Tom, one can hear the internal struggle between the need to act immediately (Collander Brown, 2010:52-3), alleviating the sense of pressure to discharge ones commonly understood duties as a worker, albeit with likely unhelpful consequences, and the gamble of waiting for a more propitious moment to arise later.

One of the striking elements of participants' answers was their use of the word 'challenge' in describing how they would respond. Dani, Samuel and Jamie illustrated this in their quotes above. Likewise, Tom's first thoughts were also to have '*challenged the young person on that straightaway'*, arising from his Christian belief that stealing was wrong and from the legal repercussions for the young woman, mirroring his initial reaction to the real situation he was reminded of in reflecting on this scenario. The word challenge was not introduced in the question and the case study only used the word 'challenging' to describe the girl's behaviour (Banks, 2010). There are many other ways workers could have described their approach: for example the words 'explored', 'addressed', 'worked with', 'questioned', 'discussed' could all be substituted into Jamie's statement - '*professionally, I think that kind of behaviour needs to be *challenged**', which are perhaps more consonant with informal educational, dialogical approaches.

The term 'to challenge' is often used informally in youth work as a 'catch all' phrase to discuss what youth workers should do when young people transgress boundaries or accepted norms of behaviour, for example, 'we should always challenge young people who

display racist attitudes'. Yet the word challenge in everyday use has particularly adversarial overtones (Chambers, 1998; Oxford Living Dictionary, undated).

Although it is evident that what these participants meant when they used this term included more than just a confrontational challenge – they talked about exploring, seeking to understand the young person's motives, etc – the use of the word challenge frames such interventions as primarily adversarial, suggesting two things:

- firstly that the actual intervention itself is viewed as 'challenging', a task which is difficult, which needs particular effort to complete successfully, and which may test their abilities.
- secondly that the worker is envisioning that this intervention is one which will result in them and the young person engaging in a contest, dispute or argument to '*decide who is superior in terms of strength or ability*' (Oxford Living Dictionary, undated)

Although youth workers will undoubtedly need to engage in and work with situations of conflict and potential conflict, continuing to use the language of challenge to frame such interventions may not be helpful to students. In particular, it echoes more general social views of young people as 'challenging' or in need of being challenged, reflecting social expectations propagated in the media of how adults and young people typically relate to each other, as being, at best, suspicious of each other and, at worst, 'adversarial' or confrontational. These views of young people understand youth work's primary function as regulating young people's behaviour and seeking to provide 'diversionary' activities, in order to divert young people away from committing crime and behaving anti-socially. None of these approaches would sit within the dialogical nature of informal education; yet they are commonly how situations of value conflict are thought about between adults and young people, and this undoubtedly has the potential to influence the way youth workers and volunteers conceive of their work with young people and the approaches they may take. This can be seen in Tom's instinct to make a 'snap judgement' about a young person's bad language and to immediately aggressively confront him about it. Students later started to notice what they described as their 'natural instincts' to act in controlling and regulating ways, although these are clearly socialised, learned behaviour.

Laura's work with the case study was also illuminating, as it transpired it mirrored an identical situation she had been in. She began by empathising with the youth worker's perspective, acknowledging the difficulty (largely due to the lack of relationship between

worker and young person) in knowing whether to, when and how to address 'wrong' behaviour; but she primarily felt the worker had missed out on an opportunity to better understand the young woman and the motives for her actions.

Whilst reading through the case study, Laura chuckled, and after listening to her initial assessment of what she would do, she explained:

> *I went on a school trip with a group of young people in Xxtown and we went to a sweet factory and some of the young people did take the sweets. And I was actually … it was a whole group of them and I was actually quite angry by that, and because they didn't hold the same values they did not see why it was wrong, they just saw it was a massive sweet factory and they weren't possibly going to miss a few packets of sweets, whereas I was coming from the perspective of actually the manager and his friend had already given us quite a lot of sweets. I thought that was really nice of him. I thought it was good that he trusted us and was like, "Actually, he's given us lots, can't you just accept that?", and actually I was like, "That's quite rude to turn around and steal things," but they were some boys and they were just excited about the idea of getting these sweets and they did not see that or accept that and I wanted them to put them back and they wouldn't. We had a student teacher with us, it was just me and this student teacher, so I went and talked to him, and he just ignored it. So, he obviously did not think - it obviously did not bother him that we were …. they had almost abused that trust, whereas it really kind of upset me as well. It made me sad as well that they were so greedy and stuff.* ***Laura, Interview 1***

Like Tom, Laura's emotional response to this real-life situation – of anger, upset, frustration and sadness – was evident in her account of it and yet she was less aware of how she might feel and the way this could impact her actions in her theoretical assessment of how she might respond to the scenario given. I asked an open question 'Please can your read the scenario and tell me your thoughts on it' (Appendix 3), to which participants intuitively imagined themselves in the situation, in the way they framed their answers, talking both about what they thought the worker should have done and what they would do. However, they did not acknowledge or recognise at this stage that they may have an emotional response to the situation, what that might have been and the impact that would have on them, their thinking and actions. This could be because their concern was to focus on action and the young person, rather than themselves as the primary actor; although I think this is a generous possibility, given that many of the participants talked about their concern to fulfil their duty and 'do the right thing', performing correctly and competently. I think it is more likely that either: they were not yet aware of their responses and ways of working in similar situations (except in the case of Tom) and therefore had little self-knowledge to transfer to

this situation; or that perhaps at this stage, they viewed it as inappropriate for workers to 'have' emotional responses to young people and their actions.

Understanding the young woman's motive was theoretically important for the participants, as was working sensitively with the young woman and within the 'possibilities' of the relationship. Their primary approach at this stage seemed to be to; a concern to fulfil their duty as a youth worker by not shying away from a potentially difficult situation in order to address a situation of wrongdoing; to then understand what was going on for the young woman; to help her understand the consequences of her behaviour; and to offer her any required support arising from this conversation.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the value positions of the students at the start of the research process. Students were clearly motivated by their personal faith-based values and dispositions to train as a youth worker and spoke with enthusiasm about their love for youth work and young people and their motives for becoming involved. Participants felt strongly about their personal faith-based values, yet were concerned these did not act as a barrier to their ability to work well with young people. They had not yet worked out how to resolve this dilemma and find a way of engaging constructively with very different worldviews. Additionally, they brought a small repertoire of examples to training from their own youth and junior leadership which significantly shaped their understanding of youth work values and practice.

Participants displayed more reticence in their discussion of 'professional youth work values' concerned to 'say the right thing' for fear of being judged: this was particularly true of the two second year students, having already completed a year of study. Participants mostly felt their personal value positions were congruent with professional values and felt little conflict between the two at this stage of the research process, although they could imagine scenarios that might occasion such conflict. This felt consonance was perhaps due to their lack of exposure to complex or difficult situations in practice; and perhaps due to a lack of understanding of what constituted youth work practice. Those students with more practice (or professional) experience, such as Tom and Sam, were beginning to recognise practice habits that did not necessarily support their work with them. Where workers had

experienced complex dilemmas, there was a sense of being overwhelmed by them. In discussing practice situations, workers were very aware of any emotional impact on them, which often constrained their ability to act on their value positions, yet they did not recognise their (potential) emotions and the impact of them in the youth work scenario.

As new students, Cate's, Laura's and Jamie's approach to value issues mirrored those of the students who took part in Fook's, Ryan's and Hawkins' (2000:38) study. They had an 'unformed and uninformed' concern to help people: one which they struggled to express in anything more than general terms and which was not informed by theory, specific experiences or insights. Sam's values were much more formed as a result of greater life experience and considerable experience as a health care professional (and no doubt by his identity as a black man). Tom and Dani had a developing awareness of themselves and the practice of youth work, understanding the role of a worker in practice, but, in Tom's case, struggling to enact this. Chapter Seven explores how the students' values developed over the course of the research period, with an emphasis on how the students themselves understood this development through their reflections on their earlier interview answers.

Chapter Seven: Developing Values

7.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and explores the development of the six core participants' values as described by them and evidenced in their second and third interviews. It follows the themes of the interview questions, first examining their growing understanding of the term 'values'; then exploring the development of their personal values as a result of their learning. Next, I look at students' understanding of youth work values and how they work with these; concluding with exploration of the connection between personal and professional values, strategies students used for managing the 'gap' between them and then how they managed to synthesise their personal and professional values, in order to 'bring themselves' to their professional role.

7.2 Values Talk – Defining and talking about values

By interview 2, students' ability to define and discuss values had developed. Every student was able to be more specific in their attempts at defining what they understood the term to mean, using the words *viewpoint, belief, a set of priorities or ideals, aspects of life*, where some had previously used the generic word '*things*', although that still did appear. Again the purpose of values in shaping both behavior and character was recognized.

By interview 3, students described feeling '*slightly more confident'* (Cate, Interview 3*)* in answering the question. Laura acknowledged feeling '*a tiny bit of pressure, like have I learnt anything since last year?'* (Laura, Interview 3), something which became more prominent in relation to discussing youth work values, but she countered this with the knowledge that, '*Right this is something we have talked about before and I have had the time to think about it so it is okay'*, (Laura, Interview 3), suggesting familiarity of the task, gained through the interview process, was a significant help. Another help was students' understanding that 'exploring values' was an on-going and developing process, rather than a static position which could be attained or understood 'correctly'. Both Cate and Samuel referred to values

development as '*… like a journey really'* (Samuel, Interview *3), 'it's a journey that I don't think will ever end. I think it's a continuous journey ….'* (Cate, Interview 3).

The terms used by students to describe and define 'values' in Interview 3 were not significantly different to the terms they employed Interview 2, defining them as:

- *principles, something you base your beliefs and way of living on, what is important to you, a personal conviction, a foundational belief, a 'platform' I stand on, something that you really believe in*
- which *you hold really close, dear to your heart,*
- which *affects everything that you do, determines your actions, informs how we live and how we act.*

However, students showed greater clarity and conciseness in discussing their understanding of 'values', and Cate and Jamie showed a marked development in the language they used to define values across the three interviews. Cate moved from describing values initially as '*things we hold close'*, to '*viewpoints we hold*' in her second interview, and finally to '*principles*' in her third interview. Having struggled in the first interview to offer anything as a definition, in his third interview, Jamie evidenced his ability to '*work it out, in my own head'* when he gave the following answer: '*I think a value is a … yes … a personal conviction, I would say, that kind of informs: one, how we live; and two, how we act to specific situations*' (Jamie, Interview 3). When asked whether he saw any progression in his answers over the three interviews, Jamie commented:

> *Yes, I definitely do. The weird thing is I don't ever remember learning about values or anything, or like how I acquired the knowledge of what a value is. I just absorbed it in some way. Because I literally … the definition I just gave came to me quite suddenly. It wasn't like I was thinking about it last week or anything….* ***Jamie, Interview 3***

This suggested enculturated learning that Jamie had appropriated for himself and internalised, rather than him being conscious of repeating 'someone else's' definition of values, acquired by rote in order to give a correct answer, but which retained no meaning for him.

7.2.1 Personal connection, greater meaning

In both interviews, students clearly described values as affecting, having an influence or impact on decision-making, life choices, actions and thoughts. However, as well as 'defining' the term values, students began to qualify their answers, adding comments or reflections

revealing a more personal connection to and emotional engagement with values that for some had not been evident previously. Samuel said: '*For me sometimes, I think there can be a bit of conflict with values as well…'* (Samuel, Interview 2). Tom described values as the:

> *core things that make up my being and sort of how I work and sort of what I think, although […] values that I always feel should come innately, but unfortunately [don't] […] I've begun to recognise that they are through external factors quite often, as in parents, upbringing, society we're born into.* ***Tom, Interview 2***

This recognition of the 'source' of his values was shared by Cate; '*They can come through childhood or different experiences through your life. You kind of gain these values or hold them and then it can affect how you work and behave.'* (Cate, Interview 2). Their thinking suggested they spoke from an experience of 'seeing', encountering and engaging with 'values' and value-issues in their life and work with an awareness they had not had previously, which suggested the term 'values' no longer represented an 'abstract' construct to them – something they '*knew of*' but did not '*know*' – but was now a concept which had meaning, with which they had engaged and about which they had their own experiences to recount.

Awareness of their own values also brought with it an awareness of how these could act as a barrier between themselves and others:

> *Having said that you hold … values are something that you hold close to and that you stand by, I do think …… sometimes I don't think you should hold your values too close because then that puts like prejudice and like judgment on the other person.* ***Dani, Interview 2***

Cate believed this issue of closely held values was one at the root of conflict in her team:

> *I have seen at times how like there can be conflict but that is because somebody's value is completely different to someone else's value and that when they are talking they can't see past their own value because they hold it so close to them.* ***Cate, Interview 3***

This is interesting, as ostensibly people in Cate's team held similar, Christian worldviews, yet the way they interpreted these in relation to their work with young people varied significantly. The theme of students' personal values not being a barrier to young people in particular was expressed in other sections of the interviews.

7.2.2 Engaging critically with earlier positions

Inviting reflection on the answers they gave in earlier interviews revealed an ability to engage critically with their earlier positions, drawing further reflections about their orientation to values. Laura demonstrated this with a critique of her earlier answers to this question:

> *I had remembered I had said 'principles' the first time. So yes I mean I think that is still a valid way to define values. But 'principles' sounds very formal and quite strong and I guess part of me feels, not that values aren't strong, but there is maybe more emotional engagement with values. 'Principles' is, I don't know, almost like something that is in your head [...] whereas 'values', actually this is what I care about and what is precious to me.* ***Laura, Interview 3***

Students cited learning to question and explore themselves and their actions in relation to the aims of youth work as an important part in the process of developing their understanding of values. Laura mentioned 'case studies' as a method that had helped her in this process:

> *It starts off with case studies and then you start looking at yourself. And I think that's been, yeah, just made it really clear, well you don't just do things because that's the way it should be done. There's a reason why you do things. And that's, yeah, that reason kind of comes from the principles of values that you hold.* ***Laura, Interview 2***

As a result of such exploration and discussion, students became more enquiring of themselves and their views, more able to recognise and work with complexity, and more open to and less judgmental of others.

> *I definitely think it's come from the questioning ..... and in the past sort of few months there have certainly been lectures [...] and encounters with young people that have very much sort of challenged me and challenged my beliefs and [...] that actually challenging has definitely sort of made my views sort of ... some of them are the same but they're a lot more malleable and there's a lot more of a grey area than there was before, not everything's so black and white.* ***Tom, Interview 2***

Students talked about being 'more aware' of their values and considered it was important to know their own values through reflecting on their actions and challenging themselves. Cate described the conscious process required to 'uncover' *unconscious*ly-*held* value positions, saying: '*Sometimes there will be values in our life that we don't necessarily ... we can't see them or put our finger on them until we dig deeper'* (Cate, Interview 2).

This idea was echoed in interview 3, where students discussed in more depth how they had become aware that reflection on their actions revealed to them some underlying values of which they were previously unaware – and described how they were then able to evaluate and think critically about those 'unconscious' value positions.

> *Sometimes I think the actions I take and my values don't always seem to match up and you are sat there going "Oh, do I value something different to what I thought?" So maybe there is kind of those 'conscious' values that you think 'Yes, I'll sign up to that, yes, I believe that, I agree with that.' But then when you actually look in practice you don't always think or, yeah you react to maybe something deeper or something slightly more subconscious values.* **Laura, Interview 3**

Laura was not alone in demonstrating an awareness that her actions did not always match her 'espoused' values – the values she was aware of, which she 'believed and agreed with'. This echoes the work of Argyris & Schön (1974) on the difference between what people say they will do in a given situation, what they refer to as an *'espoused theory of action'* and what people actually do in that situation, what they refer to as *'theory-in-use'*. This awareness of a dis-connect between espoused values and values-in-use was an important development in students' understanding and in their ability to work professionally with value issues. Samuel talked of the discomfort he felt through this process:

> *sometimes my values may have been challenged and dealing with that feeling uncomfortable and questioning why do I feel uncomfortable and kind of saying well it is okay to feel uncomfortable because that is what life is about.* ***Samuel, Interview 3***

Workers in the social care professions need to be able to recognise and acknowledge when their 'values-in-use' do not match their 'espoused values', especially when one's espoused values are those appropriate to professional practice and one's values-in-action reveal an inappropriate stance. This is often not a comfortable position to be in, yet it is vital that youth workers are able to work with this 'gap' to understand how and why what is espoused and what is enacted are not consonant.

7.3 Personal Values

The development of participants' personal values can almost be likened to peeling an onion – successively revisiting similar values, each time at a deeper level, and laying aside more 'peripheral' personal values in favour of fewer, more deeply held 'core' values. It seems students underwent this process in an attempt to make sense of working with professional values whilst also retaining a sense of holding onto and working from their most important personal values in complex and diverse situations.

7.3.1 Personal values framed in relation to participants' work with young people

Students' stated personal values in each of the three interviews were very similar at each stage. In her second interview, reflecting on her previous interviews' answer, Cate said: *'I think my values are quite similar. I think there's some stuff that I can pick out and think 'I might word that differently' or 'I might say that differently'*", evidencing a more thoughtful and reflexive response to her own values. Despite the similarity of value positions, it was students' orientation to and ability to work with them that changed and developed over the course of the training.

When discussing their personal values, participants frequently framed them in relation to their work with young people: demonstrating the high levels of motivation their personal values provided for their work with young people; and the significant overlap in relation to the values they drew on in both their working and non-working lives.

In his first interview, Jamie discussed his desire to help unconfident young people *'on the fringes'* be included and to increase their confidence, without mentioning 'empowerment' – a central value in youth work; yet in his second interview he drew on the language and framework of youth work to describe this personal value, evidencing the influence and overlap of personal and professional values in students' thinking.

> *I mean empowering is a big one personally because, you know.... I hate seeing young people who don't believe in themselves because I know I used to be like that and I know that can change.* ***Jamie, Interview 2***

This comment also highlights one of his personal 'drivers' for being in youth work: a 'reparative impulse' to undo some of the damage from one's own or another's life (Hoggett

et al, 2006:697-8; Banks & Gallagher, 2009:206), a motivation he mentioned on more than one occasion. In her second interview, Laura drew on central youth work values, presenting them as her own personal values:

> *trying to list all of them in one go is kind of hard. But yeah, I've already mentioned safety of young people, health of young people and wellbeing, I think, so that development of young people… having that environment to learn.* ***Laura, Interview 2***

This phenomenon occurred regularly throughout the interviews for all participants, for example, in this comment by Cate, where she described 'love' as a personal value and how she realised this value in her work with young people:

> *One of them is definitely love, just so that … I do love others in the work that I do and …. that the things I do are motivated by love. ….That's something I value, trying to help young people to realise that who they are is really important and that they are loved by God by being who they are.* ***Cate, Interview 2***

The same was evident in reverse. As students began to understand more of the principles and practice of youth work, they began to think about their relationships and interactions with people in their non-work lives.

> *I guess I think it's more healthy maybe even to let people … not to try and control people because I'm not going to get it right and if I start trying to go, 'Right, you should do things my way!' then actually I'm going to mess up at some point and screw a few people up with me…. But … that's hard because I think control can be …. like, I care about people so I express it through trying to control and it's like no, I don't need to do that.* ***Laura, Interview 2***

With these students it is possible to think of their choice of work in terms of a 'vocation', in the students' choice of an occupation where they are able to live out their personal commitments and beliefs through their work (Banks, 2004:166-7; Banks & Gallagher, 2009:206), as noted and discussed further in the previous chapter.

7.3.2 Greater awareness, articulation, understanding and depth

Students demonstrated an increasing awareness of themselves, their values and 'tendencies' through the process of study and were generally able to articulate these more clearly in each subsequent interview. In her first interview, Laura opened her thoughts on her personal values with laughter, saying, '*My own life, the values that I hold? That's a hard question!*'. In

her second interview, she described her previous answer as '*clutching at straws a little bit, it's quite* funny…. *a bit like, ooh, what on earth does this mean?*' Her next attempt, in interview 2, showed a little more awareness: '*I think I would still in a way struggle to list … all my values because I'm not that self-aware yet, I have to say. It's coming ….*' (Laura, Interview 2). Here Laura demonstrated her growing awareness through: her increased consciousness of being '*not that self-aware yet'*; and through her practice of learning to identify her values through her systematic reflection on her actions. The Johari window tool is useful here in understanding Laura's developing self-awareness (Luft & Ingham, 1955; Luft 1984; Batsleer, 2008:39-44). The model recognises both the conscious and unconscious aspects of the self. The 'window' (see Figure 7.1) has four intersecting quadrants denoting: what is known and unknown to self; and what is known and unknown to others.

Figure 7.1 The Johari Window

	Known by you	**Unknown by you**
Known to others	**OPEN** known by both you and others	**BLIND SPOT** unknown to you but known by others
Unknown to others	**HIDDEN** known to you but not by others	**UNKNOWN** by both you and others

In the same interview, Laura talked about a 'light-bulb' moment of self-recognition whilst reading:

> *It was saying how youth workers tend to be-, kind of want to be these rescuers by nature. And I remember reading it and thinking 'Yeah, that's me! I want to rescue everybody.'* ***Laura, Interview 2***

Despite mentioning her struggle to list her personal values, Laura assessed her ability at this point as follows: '*I think I see myself now as being much more able to articulate what my personal values are'*. As evidence of this she talked somewhat generically about how she felt more able to articulate *why* she held particular values, rather than simply holding them because she felt she should:

> *I'd say people being equal, …. probably because…. people talk about equality all the time, so yes, 'That should be something I value because it says in the Bible', or something, whereas why equality is important … I obviously had some understanding [then], but not nowhere to the same extent that I see it now.* ***Laura, Interview 2***

This at least shows her understanding that values are committed to and held for *considered* reasons and not simply because one is told to (Banks & Gallagher, 2009:210), even if she was not fully able to articulate her reasoning at this stage.

By her third interview, Laura was readily able to answer this question:

> *It has been a lot of the thinking around … people's freedom, the kind of things we did about in advocacy but again that came up in informal education …. lots of stuff to do with power and empowering people or them having power and does somebody else know what is best for them?, or do they know what is best for themselves? and how does that work? And just I think appreciating peoples autonomy maybe more. And yeah, their right to be heard and yes, just to think "Right, how can I help them learn rather than impose something on them".* ***Laura, Interview 3***

This theme of empowerment, autonomy and allowing people choice, rather than the worker 'imposing' what they consider 'is best for the young person' was one that Laura wrestled with in a number of her interview answers, and as she answered, it was hard for her to talk about values without beginning to question and explore her views on them and how they were woven into her faith-informed worldview. She was not alone in this. Like Cate above, Jamie listed very similar values to his first interview, but went on to consider how he felt his understanding of them had developed:

> *I remember from the last interview that I said community and I know that hasn't changed but I guess my understanding of it has as my understanding of a value has changed as well…… it's something you … can't force … upon people …. it needs to happen … intentionally …. the decisions that you make need to lead to the creation of that community or the formation of that community.* ***Jamie, Interview 2***

Tom believed he was '*more self-aware'* (Interview 3) and both he and Cate showed a greater awareness of where they had 'inherited' their values from, values which they were drawing on in youth work settings:

> *I've learnt that in my life there's a lot of values that I may hold from learning them from my parents and that even it can be painful but sometimes you have to evaluate those values and see if it's something you want to build your life on.* ***Cate, Interview 3***

Cate's frank admission was particularly interesting; not only was she able to identify the values she had learned from her upbringing, she was also able to go through what had been, for her, a '*painful*' process of evaluating them and determining their role in her life going forward. She identified the significant place these values held both in her own development and in her faith-informed worldview – inherited from her parents, and something about which she cared deeply. She went on to talk about a process of discovering and 'challenging' ones values – '*You don't always know what your values are and sometimes you need to challenge your own values. I think that is something that has been massive in my development.*' (Cate, Interview 3), – all of which suggests she had learned to work with herself and her values in the same way a youth worker might work with a young person, to help recognise, name, explore, evaluate and develop their values. This was supported by Laura's comment, '*It's still happening where, as an action happen[s], I sit down, look at it, pull it apart, and go, 'Oh, in that situation I valued that'* (Laura, Interview 2). Here, Laura was clearly learning to work with herself, to 'uncover', identify and understand her own values.

Journals played an important role in this process of enabling students to engage with, 'question and interpret' values and to 'exercise critical reflection and reflexivity' about the impact of their values on their own practice. This aspect of value development will be explored in more depth in the following chapter on how students used journals.

7.3.3 Values paradox: holding values more deeply, holding values more loosely

The previous section explored how students demonstrated a growth in awareness of their personal value positions, frequently informed by their faith; even if their value positions were largely unchanged, their ability to articulate and 'work with' them had developed. They also frequently framed their personal values in relation to their work with young people.

By her third interview, Cate talked about holding the same values but that '*some of them have deepened'*, suggesting a greater commitment to them, perhaps as a result of the work she had done to explore and evaluate them. Similarly, Dani (Interview 3) talked about holding the same personal values, '*but I think I say it 'how it is' more now with … reflection and [I] think before I speak*', suggesting she not only had greater clarity about her value positions

(saying it '*how it is'*), but that she spoke more thoughtfully and with greater reflection about them.

As students sought to work with their own values, making choices about the values they held and holding those chosen values more deeply, the idea of 'core values' emerged in the third interviews, values of 'importance', which students had 'worked on' or 'developed'. Tom referred to '*my awareness of my core values'* (Interview 3) and Samuel, after discussing his commitment to equality in all three interviews, commented: '*I think my main core value which I have developed on is equality,*' (Interview 3). Cate talked about seeing particular values as more important, and seeking to develop them, giving 'grace' as an example, '*not only that I accept in my life that God has got grace in my life, but that I have grace with young people'* (Interview 3).

As students became more aware and certain of their own values, they became more aware of others' values and of 'difference' where they had expected similarity. Laura spoke of her frustration on realising young people did not share her values: '*It has been a real challenge just to understand the fact that actually young people hold different values to me …… and that can be, or can feel frustrating,'* (Interview 3); a realisation Tom also echoed: '…*when I first came here …. I expected everyone to have very similar values to myself,'* (Interview 2). However, the wider context of Tom's observation here is instructive; that his value positions had not changed but he worked with them differently in relation to young people.

> *I'd definitely say that my values for myself haven't changed […] So how has it changed and developed? I think I'm not as quick to put my values on other people, […] when I first came here […] I expected everyone to have very similar values to myself and as that's gone along I've realised that people have very different values and very different sort of outlooks […] so I don't want to impose my values but I want people to be able to sort of meet me halfway sort of often with their values.* ***Tom, Interview 2***

One might expect that as students became more aware of and worked with their values – evaluating them, making judgements about which values to hold as 'core' values, understanding them more, and becoming more deeply committed to these core values – they would become less open to others' values, which they had began to realise were not always the same as theirs. However, the opposite was true; as they thought more about their own values and became increasingly aware of others' values and 'difference', they sought to ensure their own values did not become a barrier to the young people they were working

with and became more open to others. Samuel identified this in his comment on his own values:

> *Personal values? To be honest, I still believe that they're the same, but I think I'm a lot more … I feel a lot more exposed to other people's values….. yes, a lot more [open].* ***Samuel, Interview 2***

Dani recognised the need to hold more loosely to some of her values and aims for work:

> *So my personal values I think, crikey, you have to, yeah, incorporate in your youth work while using the [organisation's] values but sometimes, yeah, don't hold on too closely to them, because they do differ from different values.* ***Dani, Interview 2***

Jamie demonstrated his greater openness and willingness to listen to others' views, describing a conversation with a friend, which had led him to think more critically about a doctrinal position he had held strongly in his first interview. He said: '*I don't think I would be as-, like I think I said there that I was committed to,- believers baptism. I wouldn't say I am anymore, or not as committed'.* Jamie had previously identified both 'relationship' and 'community' as two values of importance to him, and this hierarchy of values perhaps enabled him to hold more loosely to a more specific principle. Similarly, Tom's thinking about how he drew on his personal values developed significantly during the research process. In interview 2, his reflection on the personal values he spoke about in his first interview answer elicited this response:

> *That [answer] was very much a product of the time ……. it's very interesting because although there is a lot of similarities to what I believe now or what I think value is now, I do believe that my idea now is a lot more fluid than it probably was then. So I'm more of the opinion that my values can be changed and they're not always going to be set … that actually challenging has definitely sort of made my views sort of … a lot more malleable and there's a lot more of a grey area than there was before, not everything's so black and white ….. my value is still for me personally … [but] my throwing of that on other people now is not so much … if you see, I'm not as quick to judge as I would have been.* ***Tom, Interview 2***

Tom had developed this position further by the third interview:

> *I think my awareness of my core values has probably become … all the sort of sub-things, like how I feel about … abortion, for example, or debt or something like that, … all these different values have changed dependent on the scenario, but … now I think*

> *I've been focusing mainly on narrowing it down to … 'love God and love others' and then …. as long as I keep that, that is one of my key values and that is one of my core values …. and obviously it's how I interpret that on the situation. So, I've got that in the back of my mind, that's where everything needs to be rooted to … that's the thing.* ***Tom, Interview 3***

Tom's comment suggests he thought in 'categories' and 'sub-categories' of values – high order, core values which to him were applicable in any situation, which rooted his practice and allowed some level of congruence between his personal values and the demands of professional work: and lower order principles, views and opinions, which he still chose to live out himself, but which he was able to hold more loosely to, view as context- dependent, and if necessary lay aside, in relation to his youth work, in order to draw on his 'core values'. Tom mentioned in both later interviews his love of the word paradox – *'it's been about self-discovery and finding that I'm okay with the paradox'* – and here he demonstrated an apparent paradox; his ability to hold some personal values more deeply in relation to his work whilst, at the same time, holding other personal values much more loosely. He also demonstrated a key professional competence: being able to work with and in uncertainty, which both Schön (1987) and Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000:187-189) regard as a key feature of expert practice.

7.4 Youth Work Values

7.4.1 Talking about youth work values

Whereas students talked about being much more aware of themselves and their personal values, they spoke, somewhat surprisingly, with increasing ambivalence about youth work values throughout the second and third interviews. Tom's description of youth work values as '*Transient!*' (Interview 2) captures this, a comment to which I will return later.

In the second and third interviews, the male participants often responded more quickly and emphatically to the question about youth work values (like Tom's above), whereas the female participants were more hesitant, initially expressing some concern or nervousness about outlining their understanding of the values of youth work. On hearing the question, Dani said she was '*nervous*' (Interview 3) and Cate pulled a face, explaining….

> *… we talk a lot about professional values on the course, and being in year two now, I feel like I should understand more, and when I do go over professional values I do understand more and things, but when people say it, it's a bit like "Oh, have I learnt professional values?"* ***Cate, Interview 2***

As well as Cate's uncertainty about drawing on her learning in discussion with others, comments made by the female participants pointed to the pressure they felt under to give a 'correct' answer. Dani, when asked about youth work values, felt she should '*just be able to 'reel them off''*, and looking back at her answer from her first interview, she thought she was previously '*so much more precise and specific in listing them,'* whereas she described her understanding in interview 2 as having been '*muddied by everything you learn and it's kind of overwhelming.'* Laura said, *'I can remember now that I said last time "Oh what's on the sheet about youth work values?"'* (Interview 2), suggesting she thought there was a definitive list of values she ought to be able to recall. Cate echoed this in her third interview:

> *When you get asked the question of your professional values it is like sometimes people maybe are expecting a tick list that they can be like, 'Oh, she said that, and she said [that]'… … When it comes to professional values I feel like I need to say the right words.* ***Cate, Interview 3***

Despite hesitancy amongst some, participants asserted that they had a greater understanding of youth work values, which they attributed to college learning – '*I think my youth work values that I've got now are from learning and understanding.'* (Cate Interview 2) – and to placement practice with JNC qualified workers – '*Working with people who are JNC qualified and kind of know the rules, the principles etcetera, like the back of their hand, really helped a lot because the people I'm working with at the moment are not JNC qualified'* (Jamie Interview 2). Laura was more aware of working with purpose: *'Definitely I've got much more of a sort of an aim in mind […] I am concerned about their learning and their wellbeing…'* (Laura Interview 2) and by the third interview, Laura said she '*certainly [understood] more what youth work is'*.

Similarly, Samuel identified one of the changes that had happened for him over the research period was an understanding of the philosophy that underpinned youth work aims, purpose and practice – '*I get the why,'* he said. He linked this to the idea of including young people and 'working with' them, evidencing an understanding of informal education principles:

> *When I am working with young people, if I am developing something, I like to have them integrated in that and some young people do think it's funny, 'Oh, are you asking me?' But I am very conversation-like and before you know it, you never knew this young person had this wealth of experience.* ***Samuel, Interview 3***

In Interview 2, Cate referenced and discussed a number of components she classed as youth work values – *giving young people advice*, *listening*, *supporting*, *empowering*, *intervention*, *being a dependable worker without creating dependence*, and *giving young people a voice*. When asked what she noticed about these answers, she made an interesting comment about how students 'learn the language' of youth work: '*I think you kind of learn the talk of a youth worker, so you're getting the same words thrown at you all the time and you pick it up and start using it yourself….. you can kind of learn the ways to say stuff.'* (Cate, Interview 2) Cate echoed this in Interview 3: '*There is a whole kind of jargon, the vocabulary of it and […] I sometimes think I know the words but I feel 'Is my understanding the understanding of someone else's of that kind of particular value?''* (Cate, Interview 3)

Cate's comment about learning 'the talk of a youth worker' is telling. In her second comment she referred to her uncertainty about whether workers shared the same understanding as her of a particular value, something she also observed in her second interview:

> *[Empowerment] means something to me, but I don't know whether what it means to me is the same as what it means to everyone else. I think some of the youth work values that I've picked up, all the terms and things, are quite abstract.* ***Cate, Interview 2***

Developing a 'personal but shared' (Jeffs & Smith, 1990:19) understanding of the meaning of values and how they might be implemented in a contextually appropriate way, yet still be recognisable as youth work, is an important function of professional training. This highlights the importance of spaces in training to discuss and explore the meanings students attach to key concepts in youth work, such as empowerment, learning and voluntary participation; and how values are *actually* realised in youth work settings by students in learning – in direct relation to their own practice – rather than in abstract ways, unrelated to real practice contexts.

Similarly Cate's comment about learning not only the vocabulary, but also the ways to use the language convincingly could be interpreted in three ways. It could be that Cate, at the time, believed she knew and understood the language, was using it appropriately and that it

reflected her values and actions. Another interpretation draws on the popular idiom 'fake it 'til you make it', an approach that seeks to mask either lack of knowledge, incompetence or a divergent view point, whilst trying to do one's 'professional' best for young people, until the deficiency can be acquired. It could be that this was what Cate was doing here. This approach is similar to (and perhaps is a popular version of) the technique to 'act-as-if', drawn from Adlerian therapy (Watts, 2003; 2013). It could be that Cate was adopting this strategy to confidently 'act-as-if' she knew what she was talking about until the point she actually began 'to know'. The 'act-as-if' technique '*encourages clients to begin acting as if they were already the person they would like to be — for example, a "confident individual.'"* (Watts, 2013). Watts (*ibid*) modified its use, using a 'reflective step backwards' before acting, in order to guard against uncritical and uninformed action. This step supported clients to '*reflect on how they would be different if they were acting as if they were who they desire to be'* (Watts, *ibid*), before then choosing to take action. This is a helpful process for youth work students in considering what values-in-action might look like, drawing on examples of 'good practice' they have seen in others as a guide, and is similar to other reflective models in use in youth worker education (eg. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle).

In the context of value development, it is perhaps helpful for students to 'practice' their value talk, to test it out in different contexts until their use and understanding of the language becomes more specific and nuanced. This is also a technique that has potential uses for practice – to imagine the worker one would want to be, describe what that would look like and then 'act-as-if' that were the case, in order to practice, develop and habituate new approaches.

There was a sense amongst all the students in Interview 2 that they were able to employ the language of youth work and could 'explain' youth work concepts without fully grasping the implications of this for their practice – a feeling of 'knowing about' youth work, rather than a 'knowing' which they had appropriated for themselves, from within their lived experience. Significantly, this was something students observed about themselves, when looking at their answers from previous interviews.

> *Oh yeah. That was like I didn't really understand what empowering young people was. That is really funny I picked up on that last time, in the second interview, reflected on empowering young people bit.* ***Laura, Interview 3***

I think even what I said about last time, the way that I have said it I would probably think that it is kind of a bit more immaturity in there. But now … … I think … … there is more to it than I may have thought before, kind of thing. ***Cate, Interview 3***

7.4.2 From competent self to young person-centred

The content of participants' discussions about youth work values largely fell into three areas: discussion of youth work values and the impact of these values on their practice – highlighting their change in focus from 'competent self' to 'young person centred', and their struggles with 'empowerment' and control; what 'being professional' meant to them; and their growing awareness of the diversity of contexts within which youth work is practised.

Across the second and third interviews, students named youth work values, such as:

> *advising, listening, encouraging, equipping, supporting, learning, empowering (giving opportunity, responsibility, letting young people make their own decisions), voluntary participation, giving young people voice, safety (child protection, safeguarding, health & safety), working with young people 'where they're at' and developing them, being people centred, developing identity (cultural and racial awareness), equality, anti-discriminatory, not being oppressive.*

Again, policies such as Every Child Matters and Youth Matters and the National Occupational Standards, more often referred to by students as the National Youth Agency standards, were also mentioned. Students typically named and discussed values they had a particular connection with – for example, Samuel talked about supporting young people to develop their identity and being anti-discriminatory; Laura thought a lot about empowering and giving young people freedom of choice. In each successive interview, as they gained more experience as a reflective practitioner during the research process, students talked in more detail about youth work values (generically and specifically) with greater personal understanding, engagement, critical reflection and with reference to their specific practice context and how the context impacted their own and others' practice.

Students' answers evidenced their shift towards becoming increasingly 'young person' centred, rather than task focused. Samuel began his third interview answer with: '*For me, number one, is the young person.* ***… …*** *respect[ing] and enabling them holistically to develop in their lives'*. (Samuel, Interview 3). Dani talked about supporting young people *'where they're at, [to] build them up … … and to work together to just kind of develop the youth into what they can be, but of their own doing'* (Dani, Interview 2). Tom noted his shift of focus directly:

> *I've been focusing a lot more on the relational aspect of youth work as opposed to recently instead of meeting necessarily the requirements, although that does play a big part in it [...] As I go along I start meeting with young people and getting to know them and working with them, the standards tend to take a back [seat ...] and I think more about the work with young person and then reflect on it afterwards. [...] I've become more relaxed and confident in my abilities to meet those standards that's set by the NYA without necessarily having to constantly be thinking about them.* ***Tom, Interview 2***

Tom's focus in practice had begun to move from himself, as 'competent worker', to the 'young person' and is reminiscent of the Competence Ladder or Four Stages of Competence, a model often used in skills development and first introduced in 1969 by Martin Broadwell as the 'Four Levels of Teaching' (Broadwell, 1969). It describes learners' awareness of their competence and for that reason, it is often represented by four quadrants, reminiscent of the Johari Window, see Figure 7.2 below; the similarity being the unconscious / conscious elements of the models, although one describes competence, the other self-awareness.

Figure 7.2 Stages of Competence

The journey from unconscious incompetence, through conscious incompetence, followed by conscious competence, and finally unconscious competence, described in Figure 7.2 is one that other students evidenced in their journey of values development and their ability to put

their values into practice. This is particularly so when they begin to reflect on their practice using journals, becoming aware of their 'natural instincts' in their practice and then working to align these with actions that reflect youth work values in practice.

In this example, Tom described his move from 'conscious competence', where he was still clearly focusing on being competent, to a place of 'unconscious competence', where he was more confident in his ability to work competently, and so was more able to focus on the young people with whom he was engaging.

Along with developing a more young-person-centred approach, the two values of empowering and safeguarding assumed a place of greater importance in students' thinking: '*One thing that has heightened for me really is the value of safety and kind of providing that kind of safety for all young people*.' (Cate, Interview 3). When considering the variety of youth work settings they had encountered and the diversity of ways workers practiced, students recounted that safeguarding was perhaps the only common factor they could see operating across all youth work settings: '*The only value that I've found throughout youth work that has been the same, in terms of values, is child protection*' (Tom, Interview 2).

7.4.3 Empowering – letting go of control

Empowering – a value which can encompass for example, supporting young people to voice, young people's voluntary participation (in their ability to make their own choices whether to attend), respect for the choice of the young person and supporting young people to use their power to take action – was the value that participants spoke about most frequently and in most depth in relation to their own practice. In her second interview, Cate listed the youth work values she could recall and then reflected:

> *I think the 'empowering' thing has been the thing that I've learnt the most. Instead of trying to … I think it can be easy as a youth worker to try and keep control of things, … … it can be quite a natural thing because you can feel safer in doing that because you know what's happening and things, but I think empowering others to do things and young people, I think that's more beneficial to others and to you as a youth worker as well.* ***Cate, Interview 2***

Students' struggles with enacting 'empowering practice' was evident from interview 1, and became a recurring theme in interviews and practice journals, where they discussed their struggles, through examples. A pattern emerged of participants wrestling with what they

described as their 'natural instincts' or 'habits' to tell, advise, control situations and regulate behaviour, in essence to 'work on' or 'work for' young people (to draw on Freire's (1972) distinctions) to manage their behaviour; rather than to 'work with' them to effect understanding, learning and longer-term change. In interview 1, Tom discussed his habit of 'organising' young people and his difficulties in letting young people make decisions, which had been noticed by both young people and his line manager; and Laura referenced empowerment as a value she had read about and questioned.

> *at the time it was maybe in a context of other people shouldn't be deciding for young people what's good for them and that was a difficult dilemma for me, because part of me wanted to say "but what if I do know what's better for that young person than them?"* ***Laura, Interview 1***

By the second interview, Laura had moved on somewhat in her thinking about empowerment, acknowledging it as an appropriate value to hold, but still aware of the struggle she had with it in practice:

> *I'm not sure it's quite a value, [but] being able to let young people make their own decisions. I want them to learn but I want them to be able to make informed decisions and I want it to be their decision. And that's really hard to live with because actually … … I say it's not about controlling, it's true, but that's really hard when a young person does not make the choice that you would like for them and you have to step back and go, 'No, there is this kind of this freewill and that people are kind of autonomous and I have to let that go.' I'm like wanting the best for that person but I can't impose that on them. It's that kind of … I don't know, 'working with' not 'working on' phrase that probably we talked about in advocacy, […] and that as a value that's almost held up more highly than kind of my emotions and my … almost what I want to do. I'm very much … always want to step in and save the young person, but then I have to go 'No'. So, it's definitely a value that dictates that.* ***Laura, Interview 2***

When reflecting on the answer she gave in the first interview, Laura noted that she had resolved her philosophical concerns with the idea of allowing young people choice, whilst being aware that implementing that in practice might need more work:

> *Yeah, so it just started to unfold in my head I guess that empowerment thing. But yeah; I remember it being a struggle, whereas now I can say it isn't a struggle to be a value for me. Still, putting it into practice – that, yeah, it might be difficult, but as a value, yeah.* ***Laura, Interview 2***

Likewise, Jamie named empowering as a value; '*Empowering is definitely one of them, like, allowing young people to gain confidence in themselves … … to allow young people to kind of realise their potential'* (Jamie, Interview 2), as did Dani – talking about working together with young people to help them reach their potential, '*but of their own doing, rather than manipulating it'* (Dani, Interview 2).

By interview 3, Laura's thoughts had moved on again (or perhaps she was just more honest this time), when asked what had changed for her in her understanding or approach to professional values:

> *I think I agree, well I do agree with, I guess, young people's learning and independence and kind of that young people should be able to take on leadership. […] I became really aware of how do I allow young people to be empowered and that kind of thing.* ***Laura, Interview 3***

This process of 'becoming aware' happened most visibly for students through their learning journals in Informal Education and their class sessions on exploring pieces of their own practice. Jamie and Laura used specific language, on a number of occasions, to describe the work they were doing with young people as 'allowing' them to be empowered. Although probably not intentional, it maybe suggested a view that control and power still rested with the adult worker, who 'gave permission for' the young person to be empowered. This is not necessarily how 'idealised' youth work might frame the relationship. Empowerment, in the sense of 'giving power to' young people, or 'allowing' them power, is a somewhat contested concept in youth work (Jeffs & Smith, 2005:21-22). The sense in which the students are using it is about their own process of 'letting go of control', of attempting to control young people and their actions, recognising the young person's right to make their own decisions.

Samuel's own values included social justice and liberation and he very much perceived youth work as a liberatory and empowering practice, speaking of this in many ways in his interviews from a more reconciled perspective than some of the younger participants: '*It's about working with or it's about choice of that young person…'* (Samuel, Interview 2) and 'A *big one for me as a youth worker, is - obviously young people are growing up - is realising professionally to let go […] letting go is important because if that young person is developing their confidence and on the journey, there is a [point] you have to let go as a youth worker'* (Samuel, Interview 3).

7.4.4 Being professional

Students also understood the question about professional values as one about what it meant to 'be professional'. Some addressed this element in their answers, thinking about the attributes of being a 'professional', such as '*being the best youth worker you can be [...] I think as a JNC youth worker it's the professional level as well that they're looking for*' (Dani, Interview 2); and '*doing the best you can or like reaching the standard you're expected because you're professional and you're being paid for what you want to do*' (Jamie, Interview 3). In her third interview, Cate made a link between her concern to '*say the right words*' when talking about professional values and the expectation she was increasingly aware of to be professional: '*...[it] all centre[s] on the fact that I think there is expectations of me as a professional youth worker and I need to kind of live up to them*' (Cate, Interview 3). Not surprisingly, this pressure became more acute towards the end of the research process, as students finished their second and third (final) years.

In his final interview, Tom did not talk about specific values initially, but talked instead about his reflections on the course and how it had prepared him for a job he had recently secured, as a regional youth worker supporting a group of churches from one denomination. He observed that the college course had very much focused on what the NYA expected and wanted from youth workers, but, as the church would be his employer, he was now questioning: '*Right, what do the church expect from youth work, as well? What do they value youth work as?*' demonstrating his ability to see professional values as both universal and context specific.

7.4.5 Context and difference

Earlier it was mentioned that Tom had described youth work values as '*transient*' in his second interview, going on to say that the only common value he could identify that transcended context was that of safeguarding and protecting children and young people. His exposure to different settings, workers and young people, led him to conclude:

> *Generally there is a similarity of how we interact with young people and the standards that we follow. But ..... there is an element of interpretation within there and I do believe that different people and different youth workers interpret the youth work standards and the youth work practice very much in the light of their own context theirselves [sic] and the context of the young people.* ***Tom, Interview 2***

This growing awareness of 'difference' – in contexts and worker approaches – was surprising for participants and emerged as another theme of significance throughout the research process; in particular, how context and the individuality of the worker often shaped the way values were enacted. Where participants expected conformity, they saw diversity and difference, some of which they understood as contextually appropriate, but some they judged as unhelpful.

> *When I worked at Xtown Youth Service, I think there was some of the different youth workers and you could see how their youth work looked different because of the values that they held …. the way that one person would do things would be completely different to the other…… I think sometimes maybe I have looked at it that like 'Oh, professional values are the things that everybody should kind of hold as a youth worker', but I don't know that that always happens.* ***Cate, Interview 3***

Cate was particularly struck by how a male drugs worker acted in a far less caring manner than she had anticipated a youth worker would in this setting:

> *There were certain times when a young person would maybe have a response that wasn't always very nice but [the drugs worker] would kind of respond quite harshly to it and be like "Oh well it is their own fault, wait ten years and see where they are at then"…… me and this other youth worker afterwards, we both said how we really struggled with that because we would have handled it completely different and we would have gone over and …… shown love or respected the fact if they didn't want to talk to us. And even looking at some of the young people's response to how he was, I could see how they were quite put down by it.* ***Cate, Interview 3***

It's hard to know whether this is a difference in values or is about poor practice, but in either case, the situation was one that remained with Cate nearly a year after her alternative placement. Dani similarly was aware of the impact of different contexts on the outworking of youth work values and was aware of this when she changed main placement towards the end of her practice hours:

> *I guess it's a bit more complicated especially when faith youth work comes into it …… you can do that in a charity but you can't do that in a church or you can do that in secular youth work but you can't do that in … you know, so it's like kind of knowing the boundaries but also seeing the bigger picture and understanding why they do that and what happens there.* ***Dani, Interview 2***

Laura talked about the difference between the church context in which she had been working, and her albeit limited experience in a secular setting:

> *I guess it depends on the context. I guess within my church youth work it's much easier … to express some of my values I guess because I've got the freedom to do that, whereas I guess in a secular placement actually […] I think people would say it's fair enough to explore spirituality with young people but actually that wasn't something that particularly came up in my placement. […] I had to set that aside I guess because of, yeah, the context it was in, which was ….. hard, I think it made me go, I don't know if I'd want to do secular youth work because that's something I feel I don't have the same freedom to talk about.* ***Laura, Interview 2***

By her third interview, Laura's awareness of the variety of ways of 'doing' youth work led her to consider what her own ideas about youth work were:

> *[I am] starting to shape my own ideas about youth work, what I think youth work is and I guess yes beginning to go "Oh, this is one persons perspective, this is my perspective, how does it all fit together."* ***Laura, Interview 3***

It appeared that she managed to harness something that could have been confusing to work for her benefit – viewing the diversity and variety of contexts as a mandate to develop and consider her own ideas of youth work as legitimate expressions of youth work values.

In his third interview, Tom was still ruminating on the different youth work settings he had seen and, similar to Laura, working out how to make sense of the diverse ways people performed youth work in order to manage the upcoming demands on him in his new job.

> *[I was] trying to form some sort of synthesis of how can we … how can I meet the values of the NYA and of the church and the beliefs in myself?* ***Tom, Interview 3***

How workers understood and managed this diversity and their process of synthesising their own, organisational and professional values is something that will be considered in the next section.

7.5 Connecting the Personal and Professional

7.5.1 Making connections

I have already noted earlier how students' discussion of their personal values in particular demonstrated an increasing congruence between their own values and those of youth work, with students seeking to integrate some of youth works' principles and practices into their own lives; for example, seeking to help people explore their thinking, their options and make their own choices, rather than seeking to control, tell and manage. In their discussions of youth work values, participants demonstrated an increased understanding both of the principles and practices of youth work as informal education; and the diversity of settings in which youth work took place and the many ways it is practiced, dependent on both context and the individual worker.

When asked the question 'How do you feel your personal values and professional youth work values fit together?' in interview 1, all participants except Samuel believed there was a 'good fit' between them. Through the research and teaching process, their answers to this question became more complex as participants' awareness of value differences grew. By the third interview, participants were both talking about and demonstrating a consonance between their own values and 'their' youth work values, talking of 'synthesis', 'my professional values', and being 'morphed' into a youth worker. However, not all students believed this to be the case in their second interview. At that stage, Cate, Laura, Samuel and Tom initially described some tension between their own values and the values of youth work, although on exploring this further, it became apparent that not all the points of tension they discussed were attributable to this binary personal / professional difference: some tensions arose because they sought to implement values more appropriate to youth work within contexts that restricted this – their tension was between their youth work values and the values of the organisation.

Cate had noticed this change in her approach to youth work values and the impact on her work and consequent relationship with her placement. *'My youth work values came out of [my] personal values before. I don't think now as much that's the case. I think my youth work values that I've got now are from learning and understanding'* (Cate, Interview 2), suggesting that she had developed an appreciation that youth work as an occupation drew on a particular set of values (not simply those she had previously witnessed in her church and

placement setting), and that she had become aware that not all of these were consonant with her own practice. As a result, she was beginning to work with herself around these perceived differences, asking herself: '*…what do they mean for me as a youth worker and are they as important to me as they are, and, if not, should they be, or why are they not?*' (Cate, Interview 2).

Her main concern at this stage was around how to work with young people whose values differed to what she felt were her 'Christian' values and knowing '*when to talk with young people about stuff*' (Cate, Interview 2) whilst not imposing her own values on them. As she talked through this, she identified the tension as '*between allowing them [young people] to have their own values but yet helping them to grow into being more of a human that is helpful*' (Cate, Interview 2). This comment directly reflected the struggle Cate was having at that point in her placement with a number of young people who were being aggressive and hurtful towards other group members. Cate did not want to 'force' her values on them, and had begun to draw on informal education practices to seek to encourage them to question and explore what they were doing and its impact on others. She felt this approach 'relieved' this tension for her a little. This points to two sources of Cate's 'felt' tension: 1) the difference between her own values of respect for people (which would be consonant with youth work's in this instance) and the values young people were demonstrating; and 2) the various approaches to working with this difference – namely, telling young people what values they should hold (her learned way of working from previous practice), compared with helping the young people understand, explore and make judgements about the values they actually held (an informal education approach). Cate's discussion revealed the difficulty for her of seeking to implement youth work approaches: her tension was not with youth work's values, but how to work appropriately with young people around value differences.

One of the students' major concerns was how to reconcile their work as youth workers with their world-view as Christians, and particular strands of moral teaching, which they linked with this world-view. This was evident in Samuel's thinking in interview 1: he had a greater awareness at that stage of the potential differences he might encounter, although for Samuel these concerns were less about moral positions and more about his ability to find points of common ground with others within non-Christian settings and how he could 'be an ambassador' for Christ in these places. In the second interview, Samuel felt there was still some conflict, but that he understood this much more, and he said of his experience, working with a secular group in his community: '*I was lucky in my own community to work in a*

non-Christian setup, because in fact that experience has completely emancipated me again,' (Samuel, Interview 2), going on to explain:

> *the frustration I thought might come from the secular youth work, it's not that. In fact - I'm getting worked up now! – […] I felt that there was some space created there by very senior people to hear what Christians had to offer, which I would expect would have come from churches. […] It was just surprising for me…* ***Samuel, Interview 2***

Surprisingly for Samuel, he found common ground with secular youth work around a shared concern and value for young people in the community and their similarity of approach to youth work; whereas, despite a shared 'world view', he found his church was uninterested in engaging with young people, contrary to his hopes and expectations, something he found '*hard to deal with when I look back into my bible'* (Samuel, Interview 2).

Laura had struggled with the concept of empowerment from her first interview, in particular wrestling with the question *'but what if I do know what's better for that young person than the*m?' (Laura, Interview 1), and the extent to which she sought to influence and direct young people's decision-making and actions. Her thoughts on this continued to develop through the research process:

> *I think now, me … I think that I saw it as 'This is how I'd work with a young person, this is how I'd work with a friend', and I don't think I quite … I think now I'm like actually … I think this kind of empowerment and giving people freedom is maybe should be applied to my friends and my other relationships to an extent. I think … I maybe see now that maybe pressuring people into things is not the best way to go about it and I think maybe I would have been like, 'well I can pressure my friends but I can't pressure young people, whereas now I'm like well actually, I don't know whether I should be pressuring my friends.* ***Laura, Interview 2***

This evidenced the beginning of an integration of 'professional' values and approaches (those congruent with youth work values) into her personal life and relationships. Laura noted the inevitable connection between personal and professional in a work context and how that shaped her as a youth worker:

> *I mean I think again a lot of my personal values and sort of my youth work values are going to tie together because that's who I am, I don't stop being Laura just because I'm being a youth worker at that moment. I'm still the same person.* ***Laura, Interview 2***

7.5.2 Managing tension: wearing professional masks

In interview 2, Tom discussed a concrete situation where the choices two young people made (to carry a pregnancy to full-term) had been consonant with his own moral position. He was aware that he was able to work with them and offer them support much more easily because of their choice. However, he also acknowledged: '*I genuinely do feel that my values would have been in severe conflict with the standards of … that's set out in the NYA, if they decided that the best thing they felt was for them to get an abortion'.* On exploring this hypothetical situation, Tom talked about his desire to present a professional approach to supporting the young people through a choice he disagreed with. This suggested that his tension was not with the 'NYA standards' – an ethic to offer freedom of choice, advice, guidance and support to the young people, which he was trying to implement appropriately – but with how to enact that convincingly whilst disagreeing with the choice they made. Tom thought this would involve him in:

> *putting on a mask that wasn't necessarily my own…. So the professionalism and wanting the best for them and helping them with the options, would be disguising this inner sort of being… sort of, trying to really want them to keep [the baby] […] I'd like to believe that I would have put the professional mask on and I would have helped them through that. But I do … I'm also realistic in the fact that I would definitely be beating down my own personal views very regularly to try and subdue them.* ***Tom, Interview 2***

This is very similar to a comment of Cate's about 'putting on' professional values - '*Oh, here is my professional value that I have put on'* - and is reminiscent of the 'act-as-if' and 'fake it 'til you make it' approaches discussed earlier, seeking to act out one's 'professional' best for young people, whilst trying to mask either lack of confidence, knowledge, incompetence or a divergent view point. In the second interview, Tom was beginning to resolve some of the tension of 'performing' in ways he wasn't fully committed to, by developing a 'hierarchy' of values, with some 'core' values that were more important than others. In this case: 'loving God and loving neighbour', ie. offering care for young people, 'trumped' an obligation to advocate and promote his moral stance in situations of differing value positions.

7.5.2 Synthesising, integrating, forming

By the third interview, Tom talked about how he had managed to synthesise his understandings of the aims of youth work in church-based settings with the aims of youth work as laid out by the NYA. His reflection on his previous answer in Interview 2 is interesting:

> Tom: *obviously this first one … I'm still thinking a bit like a new youth work student, even though I'd already had a year of college. Still thinking with a sort of like … youth work values, quickly churn out all the NYA values and stuff I can think and how they conflict with my faith beliefs. I think similarly with this second interview, as well. Whereas now I think, as I've just explained, the synthesis of ideas … there seems to be more a coming together of … so, rather than the … I think … did I describe some masks or something like that? Or facades and masks?*
> ***Researcher: Yeah, you did.***
> *Tom: And sort of putting something on instead of putting something else on. I think I've begun to realise that there is only one mask, really, and that's the one I'm wearing and it's got to be sort of a combination of the two, as I say, it's got to be the synthesis, the coming together of the governmental with the sort of personal faith.* ***Tom, Interview 3***

Dani also discussed how her youth work and personal values were *'merging together, only because I know myself more and I kind of am aware of what I'm doing more'* (Dani, Interview 2) and illustrated this with a discussion of how she put her personal sexual ethics aside to support a young pregnant woman.

In Interview 3, Samuel confidently affirmed that his values and youth work values fitted together *'in regards to how they govern what I do in my practice'* and talked of *'my professional values'.* He was aware that he and young people might hold differing values, but believed *'it is what you do with that and how you understand'* that was important, referencing what he had learned about conversation through the informal education module as key in helping him reconcile how to work with differing value positions. As he reflected on his answers from Interview 2, he discussed how he had used this same understanding to help him move on from his frustration with the church, to engage in conversation with them about young people, asking them *'why do you have this particular view about young people? ….. So I think there's some learning for me to realise where they are at as well,'* (Samuel, Interview 3.

This is very similar to Cate's journey, who found herself 'working with' volunteers in her placement who used approaches to managing young people's behaviour that she found extremely frustrating. In fact, the focus of her concern around youth work values had shifted: where previously she was concerned about how she understood them and worked them out, now she was frustrated that her placement not only did not understand or implement youth work values, but they were inhibiting her ability to do so. This caused her considerable frustration. Cate talked about wanting to engage in more needs-led holistic work (running a healthy eating project) arising from conversations with young people, which she judged, as a

'professional youth worker', was appropriate and needed work. Instead, her placement favoured sessions of bible-based teaching, and dismissed the plans she had made with the young people.

Cate's thinking had continued to move towards an approach more consonant with 'informal education'. Not only was she '*very conscious of not telling a young person what to do or how to think, but helping them to see, on a journey of reflection with them and seeing what is the best way for them to think about a certain situation'* (Cate, Interview 3), she had taken on board the Freireian ideal of the teacher also learning from the student in dialogue*; 'I am not trying to impose my values but I am trying to care for this young person and that might mean at times that I have got to go to on a journey with them and even at times I may kind of rethink my values on learning.'* (Cate Interview 3).

Reflecting on her previous answers Cate made the following thoughtful observation of her development:

> *Before I saw how that [not telling but working 'with'] was a professional value [...] but over my journey how that professional value has kind of become more of my value and so it has become more natural to me and I think it helps me to become a better youth worker because it is not something that I have to be like, 'Oh, here is my professional value that I have put on', and 'In this situation I have to do this because that is my professional value' when maybe deep down it is not the way that I feel. But because it has kind of moved into being more of a personal value, it comes more naturally from me. I think maybe that is why I have struggled more with the whole professional and personal boundary because there has been this journey where my professional values isn't something that is outside of me or that I wear but it is becoming more of who I am. And that means that my youth work is more natural to me ....* ***Cate, Interview 3***

This comment beautifully illustrates the process of self-appropriation of learning that Rogers notes is required for 'significant influences on behaviour' (Rogers, 1969:152); and echoes work on values development in nursing literature (Benner, 2000; Weis & Schank, 2002), which discusses the importance of the internalisation of professional values for expert practice, enabling the formation of a professional identity. Within youth work, this would involve a process of critical evaluation of 'professional' values within a community of practice, as part of a process of both owning and committing to these values and a collective shaping of the professional value base that informs professional youth work practice, similar to the process Banks and Gallagher (2009:207) advocate. Participants' interviews showed the

foregrounding of those personal values which supported their professional practice ('core personal values') and the commitment to key professional values, when considering their identity as a professional youth worker in an attempt to develop a sense of 'professional integrity' (ibid:206-209).

Students talked about their values being 'formed', or to use Dani's terms, '*morphed*' and '*conditioned*' by college into the professional youth work values. Interestingly, students were able to make a distinction between their 'global' personal values and their 'local' professional values (Banks and Gallagher, 2009:205) whilst also recognising the need to still 'be yourself' whilst performing their role as a professional youth worker.

> *you have to bring them [your personal and professional values] together as well because you have to be yourself.* ***Dani, interview 3***

> *I guess I feel that when I am a youth worker I am always myself and so those personal values and those professional values come together but maybe when I am myself I am not always a youth worker.* ***Laura, Interview 3***

Laura clearly had an awareness of herself as a youth worker and how she was able to inhabit that role with integrity; and of herself beyond that role.

7.5.3 Coming to professional voice

A striking feature of the interview process – where students were given transcripts of earlier answers and asked to reflect on them – was their surprise at the lack of overt difference in the content of what they said, despite the fact that they felt 'very different'. Cate's responses typify this.

> *I'm quite surprised. I think I knew that a lot of the same values would come up, but ….I find it quite surprising how they are so similar because I feel so different than I did when I said these things. I thought there would be a bigger change in how my values have changed.* ***Cate, Interview 2***

Cate's reflection on this comment in the final interview is fascinating, where we explored this in more detail. Cate looked at her similar personal values across the three interviews and reflected:

> *it seems like it is a different me, in a way, because I think now I look at it and it feels like it is someone a lot, not immature, but from where I am now, I think I have been able to kind of pinpoint things more rather than just saying like statements, but actually seeing the value, so I have been able to vocalise it better, rather than just kind of being like spilling out loads of things….* ***Cate, Interview 3***

When asked if she felt a connection to this 'old Cate' of the first interview, she gave a thoughtful and reflective response, worth repeating in full here:

> *Yeah I do in a way and I think it is kind of, I look back and in a lot of these answers I can see other people speaking in a way, like maybe different youth workers or different people, where I have kind of picked up their value and because I have spent a lot of time with them … it's been my value that I have taken on or from my family. And I think now, looking at it, I am talking about values and think I am more independent in thinking, not in the fact that I don't think anything affects me, but that I am able to challenge things more…. when I say the old Cate …. the reason I say more immature is because I can see how I maybe didn't challenge things or actually really dig deeper, [where]as now, I think I do maybe challenge more the things that I think or the things I do I can kind of challenge: Well, where is that value coming from? Is it coming from people around me? Or my environment? And if it is, is it a kind of learnt value that I want to carry on to hold or do I not? Because if I don't, then I need to work on a new way of working or a new value…* ***Cate, Interview 3***

Cate described a process of 'coming to voice': coming to recognise the voices of others in her own narratives and evaluating their values and opinions to decide whether they were ones she wanted to continue to hold; and then finding her own considered opinion and voice. This was similar to Laura's experience of developing her own opinions about youth work:

> *So I think just beginning to […] shape my own ideas about youth work, what I think youth work is and I guess, yes, beginning to go "Oh this is one person's perspective, this is my perspective, how does it all fit together"* ***Laura, Interview 3***

Just as youth workers seek to enable young people to 'come to voice' (Batsleer, 2008), the role of youth worker education can be framed as enabling students to 'come to professional voice' – to develop their awareness of their professional self within the community of practice; their values and their understandings, along with their ability to articulate, reflect on and evaluate these with coherence. This is an important process in professional development, showing a critical level of self-awareness.

7.6 Conclusion

Through the interview process, students reflected on both their personal and professional values development. They identified that their personal values were very closely tied to their motivations for working with young people and as the research process developed and they progressed through their youth worker education, the connections between their personal and professional values became richer and more complex. Students foregrounded the personal values which motivated their work and which enabled them to bring 'themselves' to their role of professional practitioner; and as they learned more of youth work values and critically reflected on them in their light of their own values, they found in some cases that youth work values expressed their own personal intentions and beliefs better than their own 'habits' did, and so sought to change some of their actions in their personal lives.

Students' growing awareness revealed to them the 'gap' between their espoused values and their values-in-use. This was particularly prevalent in students' understanding of the role of youth workers, and their habituated practice, to regulate and manage young people's behaviour and to control and direct their decision-making. They began to be aware of their 'natural instincts' and to work with themselves to develop their practice of informal education. As they became more aware of their lack of knowledge and their 'incompetence', students spoke of 'learning the language', 'putting on' professional values, and 'wearing professional masks' to cover their deficiencies, until they became more skilled and confident. The principles and practices of informal education, particularly the concept of engaging in a dialogue with others, supported students to resolve much of this tension, enabling them to work with young people, their situations and value positions, rather than seeking to manage, control, regulate or direct them.

Towards the end of the research process, students talked of starting the process of synthesising and integrating their values, as a result of debating, critiquing and evaluating their own values and professional values; and then working with both to develop *'my professional values'*, values which they owned and to which they were committed. As they developed a clearer sense of themselves as a professional practitioner, they began to find their 'professional voice'; becoming increasingly able to articulate their values, aims and judgments about their practice and the work in which they wanted to engage.

The nest chapter explores how journals supported this process, focusing on the journals students wrote for the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination module.

Chapter Eight: Learning Journals and Paired Work: a safe space for deep, personal engagement in professional values development

8.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the students' use of learning journals, coupled with the paired learning exercise employed in the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination module, as a way of supporting students to develop reflexivity and to engage in key values development work. In it, I draw on data from learning journals written by all the research participants (those in Groups A and C, as well as the six students we have become familiar with in Group B), in order to better illustrate some of the key themes arising from the journals.

The chapter begins by briefly revisiting the structure of the Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination module (explored in more detail in Chapter Five) and considering how I introduced the methods and the impact this had on the students' experience. I describe students' general approach to journal writing before exploring four themes arising from the students' use of journals, which are introduced below. I conclude with a summary of the effectiveness of the methods used in the module as tools for value development with students.

Students used the learning journals to identify, explore and critique their own values and professional values and the way these shaped their practice. It is possible to group these uses into four broad areas;

1. Making meaning and sense of the emotional aspects of their learning journey

> *processing and making sense of: their feelings and their thoughts about the module content, particularly feelings of uncertainty, excitement and surprise; the teaching and learning strategies employed in the module; and my approach as a teacher.*

2. Developing a Habit of Self-Awareness and Reflection

reflecting on themselves, what they were learning about themselves through the class, through participation in the class methods and through reflection on their life experiences and influences.

3. Growing Awareness of and Ability to work with Difference

reflecting on their awareness of 'otherness' and difference, both in people's experiences and their approach to youth work, which they sought to make sense of.

4. Processing Theory and Linking it to Practice

relating theory explored as part of the module to their youth work practice; and thinking through what they might do with this learning in practice.

In practice students moved freely between these areas as they wrote, using their experience of the classes and life to reflect on themselves and their growing awareness of their own values and habits, linking this in to theory and/or their youth work practice, whilst also processing their associated emotions about themselves, situations and issues. Although students had the freedom to write about what they wanted (as the journals were not marked for content), students chose to use the journals to write for their own learning, writing about some aspect of their experience or learning which related to the module content. It is possible that as the practice of journal writing was compulsory (even though the content was not dictated), students felt that they may as well make best use of them, although many students framed journal writing more positively than this.

8.2 Setting the Context: The Class and Preparing for Journaling

The Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination ('Advocacy') module was taught three times within the empirical research stage of this study (2008, 2010, 2012), to three student groups, which I labelled A, B and C. Although a Level 4 module, it was taught to a combined year group of first and second year youth work students, due to the small number of applicants to the youth work course. For Group B, who participated in the research interviews, it fell between the first and second research interview.

The Advocacy module had three distinctive features, revisited here and outlined in more detail in Chapter Five;

- Paired learning: in class, students spent considerable time in 'paired learning' exercises – structured, uninterrupted talking and listening – rather than group discussion or being 'taught' by the tutor. This offered students significant space to explore and reflect on their life experiences and learning.
- 'Compulsory' Free Journaling: the students were obliged to submit ten, weekly journals of a minimum of 400 words, by a negotiated deadline, in order to pass the module. However, as the journals were not graded, students were free to write about whatever they wanted.
- Ungraded module: the course was not graded but marked as pass / fail, based on a final student presentation to the class and their self-assessment, supported by peer and tutor assessments

As part of the module teaching and learning strategy, students were required to submit ten, weekly journal entries by an agreed weekly deadline in order to pass the module, alongside a final presentation of their learning. The journals were mandatory but the content itself was not graded: they simply had to be submitted on time and of a minimum word length of 400 words. The class agreed a weekly deadline for submitting journals, although individuals were at liberty to re-negotiate that deadline with me, if they were unable to meet it, as long as they took responsibility for this in advance (except in the case of an emergency).

It was important to help prepare students for the purpose of journaling and the different style of writing utilised in journals (Moon, 2006:90-91). For those who had not used journaling in their everyday lives, there was a concern that, because they were being asked to write these at university, the journal should be an academic reflection on events, with no mention of self; or that it should mirror the ten 'reflective recordings' youth work students were required to write for their Practice Portfolio. The purpose of these reflective recordings was to demonstrate practice competence related to the National Occupational Standards: students had to include theory and reference to specific standards. The topic of some of the reflections were 'directed' to cover particular practice areas. Students spoke about these with some levels of anxiety and with an awareness that they were writing for an external audience – the examiner. Rather than writing the ten reflections fortnightly over the course of the two semesters (the purpose of which was to develop a regular habit of reflection on their practice), some students left writing the majority of them just prior to their Portfolio submission, thereby not using them as intended for the purpose of ongoing reflection.

To counter these potential assumptions about journals and their purpose, I gave a detailed explanation in the Module Outline of the purpose and function of journals and how I hoped students might be able to use them for their learning in parallel with the classes (see Appendix 1). I offered some 'suggestions' about how they might approach selecting material for the journals and writing them. Students were encouraged to choose areas for reflection that interested them and that would help their learning: the intention being that in practicing selecting material from which to learn, they were developing a valuable skill (Tash, 2000:93). I encouraged students to 'write for themselves' - ie. for their own learning and not for an external audience/assessor - about whatever they found most helpful to them, as follows:

> You may find that writing the journals comes easily to you. If not, you won't be alone! But the discipline of writing them regularly should bring improvements and the reward of record of your own growth and development of skills. Just to remind you - the journals are a requirement for passing the unit, even though they do not carry an academic mark.
>
> **Hints on Writing Journals**
> **Some suggestion on what you could write about…**
> - Write for yourself, be honest and make it useful to you.
> - Write about your experiences in the workshops, how you found the exercises and paired working.
> - Reflect on what you are leaning about yourself; does this surprise you?
> - Reflect on your feelings and why you think you felt this way.
> - Write about things that interest you, puzzle you, make you excited or confused.
> - Write about anything you have read which has struck a chord with you or made you angry.
> - Write about what you are learning and how this is affecting your youth work.
> - Write about any tensions you feel between your personal values and beliefs, what you are learning, your understanding of youth work's values, society's values and the 'received' doctrines of your religious faith.
>
> (Gatenby, 2010)

As the journals were not graded for content, students had the freedom to write about anything they wanted to. As long as the journals met the minimum word length and were submitted on time, the journals met the module requirements. Despite the opportunity to

write about anything, students used the journals to explore and support their learning around the themes suggested above.

I always acknowledged receipt of journals by email and also sought to make a comment in my reply that demonstrated that I had read what they had sent me, particularly in regards to the early journals, in order to encourage students in their efforts. Some students were inevitably concerned about this style of writing and often sent the first journal with an accompanying question or comment, such as: '*Is this OK?*' '*Hope this is what you wanted*'. '*Wasn't sure what to write!*' In such cases I replied asking if they had found it helpful for their learning, reminding them that this was the purpose of the journal, but also making a brief assessment of the material in the journal and its possible usefulness for their learning, either to assure students that they seemed to me to have a good sense of how to use them, or offering some pointers to students who appeared to be struggling.

After students had written their first journal, in the second Advocacy class I created space in the paired work for students to reflect on their experience of writing the journal and on the content of what they had written. This helped students explore the process of journal writing and how they had experienced it; and it also enabled students to hear others' experiences of the task, fostering an understanding that students can reflect on the processes of their learning on their own and together.

I read whatever students sent me and, where appropriate, I offered feedback on it. Sometimes feedback was given personally by email; sometimes themes arising in a number of journals were explored collectively in class; occasionally I would invite a student to talk about their journal content with me, if I considered a conversation might be the best way of addressing something arising in a journal.

8.3 Making meaning and sense of the emotional aspects of their learning journey

> *processing and making sense of: their feelings and their thoughts about the module content, particularly feelings of uncertainty, excitement and surprise; the teaching and learning strategies employed in the module; and my approach as a teacher.*

The early Advocacy classes set the tone for the module, in particular the first class, which included an introduction to the module methodology as well as the content. Experience through the three cohorts demonstrated that this was best introduced through allowing students time in class to read through the Module Outline and Introduction to the Module Methodology, followed by a discussion on the module methods, practice of the paired working exercise and collective reflection on students' experience of this. When given a choice, rather than read about the methodology in class, students usually opted for a verbal explanation from me, committing to read it on their own afterwards. Or rather, in an attempt at a democratic process, I offered a choice to the class and one vocal student quickly expressed their preference for me to explain the methods to them, a few others swiftly endorsed that option and if anyone disagreed, not surprisingly, they did not speak up. I am now much more aware of the complexities of seeking a consensus for activities like this within a student group (Brookfield 1998:288) and as a result of these experiences, I no longer give the option.

At the times when I gave an explanation, it became apparent that it was ineffective as a way of helping students orient themselves within an unfamiliar methodology. My explanation was not always clear and students would often lose attention during my explanation. As a result, students struggled in coming weeks to understand and work with the unusual methods: they could not grasp the relevance to their practice of developing reflexivity skills, or what was referred to more than once as 'naval gazing': and they wondered why I 'wasn't teaching them' in a more traditional way.

As a result, some of those students found it far more difficult to engage constructively with the module activities from the start; they felt frustrated by an approach for which they had no frame of reference and regularly voiced this in their early journals. The journal excerpts below illustrate this.

> *I was very surprised at the format for the lecture as I understood it as it would be lots of looking at laws and policies concerning the subject matter. As soon as Helen asked us to move the tables I began to think this is going to be a touchy feely session. What is Helen going to ask us to do?* ***Emma, Group A, Advocacy Learning Journal 1***

> *The whole process made me uncomfortable [...] My discomfort comes from the fact that at this point I do not trust Helen's methods. I don't doubt Helen's sincerity or intelligence, but I was confused by Helen's methods and found them beyond post modern.* ***Joe, Group A, Advocacy Learning Journal 1***

This experience contrasted with students who were part of the core research group (Group B) who read through and then discussed the module methodology during the first class. Their journals were less caught up with processing the module methods and their affective responses to them; and instead they were more able to focus on class activities, their reflections on those experiences and on the theory that was introduced in class.

> *The first workshop I thought was very useful. The reason for this was that firstly we read for 30mins and concentrated on the module and the purpose for the lectures in this semester.* ***Dani, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 1***

> *Having been to the first lecture I feel like I can start to form some expectations of the course. I think it's going to be an interesting journey for me and I might have to probe some of my attitudes and beliefs about people. I wonder whether there will be some challenges that I expect and others, which come completely out of the blue.* ***Laura, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 1***

> *I was not really sure what to expect and was surprised that this session was different from all other lectures […] I was […] a little apprehensive about what would be expected of me and how I may be asked to do activities in front of the group […] However, as the session went on this did not really bother me and enjoyed hearing others share within the group and sharing myself.* ***Cate, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 1***

I have attributed this ease with the module methods to the fact students were more aware of the module methods and their rationale, through reading the introduction to the module methods and discussing it with me. There may be another explanation: which is that I had already spent significant time with six of the students from this group, having interviewed them for an hour as part of the research. As a result of this process, I had learned much about their story and the motivations which had lead them to study youth work; and they had learned a little of my interest in values development and had observed my general approach and demeanour. This perhaps contributed to their willingness to trust me and therefore the methods I was employing.

My subsequent experience with classes in 2014, 2016 and 2018 has shown that reading the module introduction in class and then discussing it together is a significant help in supporting students to understand the rationale for the module methods, which enables them to participate more confidently in class learning activities, particularly the paired learning work.

8.3.1 Journals as a 'safety valve': processing visceral responses to method

For the students who were unfamiliar with the module methods, journals played an important role in both enabling them to 'air' their frustrations to me, whilst also tempering their feelings, by encouraging reflection on them. They also gave the tutor a vital insight into how students were able to work with and make use of the module methods. Joe, who was quoted earlier on page 211, continued to wrestle with his feelings and thoughts about the module in later journals, where he acknowledged the value of reflective journaling in managing his natural instincts and desires to dismiss the module activities.

> *My prejudice continues to want to riducule [sic] the whole process (that Helen has introduced us to) but this particular discipline (reflective journal writing) helps to reign such urges in as I reflect on the fact that people often ridicule what they don't fully understand. More than that it is much easier and more comfortable to riducule [sic] than to try and engage in the process. I just need to hang in there and force myself to engage, despite my natural desire to disengage.* ***Joe, Group A, Advocacy Learning Journal 3***

In Joe's case, he demonstrated his growing ability to 'work with' and 'extend' himself beyond his initial urge to disengage from the class (Crosby, 2001; Young, 2006), instead encouraging himself to 'hang in there'. The opportunity, through journals, to let me know how students were experiencing the class operated as a 'safety valve'; by expressing and working through what they viscerally did not like and why, they were increasingly able to move beyond those feelings and to 'unblock' themselves, through their attempts to make sense and meaning of the activities. Joe evidenced this in week four:

> *Interestingly its a part of the picture I imagined would be revealed in the first week but I think I now understand why it has been held back until week 4. The need to examine the self has been important and though I constantly battle to move on from the self-reflection I can see the value in the practice. Its fair to say that if I werent in a controlled environment (and by that I am no[t] suggesting a traditional hegemony!) like this course then I almost certainly would not allow myself the opportunity to self reflect on this level.* ***Joe, Group A, Advocacy Learning Journal 4***

Despite his struggles Joe used the space created in the paired working to reflect on himself (he could have chosen to use these times in class otherwise, as I had no way of monitoring what was discussed in the pairs) and he had begun to find the practice helpful. In Journal six, Joe commented that the framework of the course had allowed him to approach the session on racism better equipped than he would have been five weeks previously; and he finished by commenting that he was starting to quite enjoy the course. The journals played a vital

role in enabling students to process their thinking and feelings about all aspects of the module and their experiences of it, including me, as their tutor.

Over the course of the first few weeks, as students began to read and understand theory which supported the methods – in particular Freire's pedagogy – they began to be able to make more sense of what they were experiencing in class; the activities, their responses to them, and the reasons for this.

> *Knowing that the feelings I've experienced as I've moved from the banking to the problem-posing method of educating are very much normal and that they've been theorised by Freire years before I've had the experience is some what mind-boggling. To think that I'm following a theory he put forward almost exactly.* ***Jamie, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 5***

8.3.2 Journals as a 'safety valve': processing emotional responses to content

Students did not only experience strong emotions in relation to the course methods: the content of their reflections at times drew emotional responses from them when reflecting on aspects of their life experience. Students discovered that the practice of self-reflection was not simply an intellectual activity; it impacted their emotions, as Cate's and Alice's journals illustrate.

> *I feel I am learning a lot about myself but at the same time feel there is so much more to know and that the process of knowing who I am and why I am that way can be very challenging and painful. I have been thinking more about how things that had been said about me or the way I have perceived myself when I was younger has massively affected what I think of myself now, even though it may not be who I truly am. This can also be very painful as it can bring back emotions and feelings I have tried to forget about or tried to mask.* ***Cate, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 5***

> *I talked about it a lot when I got home, because it was bugging me. For years, I've been trying to figure out what was the driving force that led me down the roads I went down when I was younger; mainly [redacted activity]. Looking back now, I think it was genuinely just because [redacted reason], and I felt isolated because of it; I wanted to understand this new side of myself, and went about it in a bad way. Looking at my life from that angle, it makes a lot more sense, and I can explain how manipulative and self-aware I can still be through that, and why I "irrationally" hate a lot of people.* ***Alice, Group C, Advocacy Learning Journal 2***

On occasion, students were extremely frank in their journals and trusted me with sensitive information about themselves. On occasion, that process was clearly painful, as they revisited past experiences and connected with the emotions they felt at the time (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985). Although students were rarely this open and vulnerable in full-class discussions, their journals indicate they were much more open in the paired learning work.

8.4 Developing a Habit of Self-Awareness and Reflection

reflecting on themselves, what they were learning about themselves through the class, through participation in the class methods and through reflection on their life experiences and influences.

The suggested questions for the paired work exercises in the early classes encouraged students to explore themselves, their values and socialisation, increasingly in relation to theory simultaneously introduced in these classes. As noted above, students frequently used the early journals to reflect on their experiences of module methods and what they were learning about themselves through them; and through this weekly practice, began to develop a habit of self-reflection, which enabled a growing awareness of themselves, their values, their habits and practice. These early journals often had a revelatory quality about them, as students 'realised' or 'discovered' something hitherto hidden about themselves:

> *During class today, I … realised just how poor a listener I am. […] reading the comments written about Lindahl's work […] made me reflect on my own practice of listening in youth work as well as in areas of my life and I realised that, even though I think of myself as a good listener, I am not much better than anyone else. I started thinking about some of the discussions I have had with some of my young people, when I should have been simply listening to them. Instead I have often found that I have become distracted by what to say next and often missed the chance to discover and reflect on something new I might have learned about or from that young person.* ***Tom, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 1***

> *It was hard to talk about myself because [I] never really get the chance and was weird for me to have someone to listen, too, without interrupting because that never really happens either in my life. I realised the importance to reflect on self in a deeper level […] I generally give a lot and don't have anyone to help and listen and give to me.* ***Dani, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 1***

> *I found the experiences in Monday's class quite eye-opening in some ways. I'm starting to realise that the idea of listening is something I've always taken for granted. […] The reading we had to do at the start of the class really got me thinking about how I listen, and the fact that listening is an act that we really have to do much more proactively […] I genuinely felt like I had failed a little when I couldn't recall a specific phrase that Tom had used, which I was certain I had made a mental note of. I've come to realise lately, and even more so after Monday's class (/workshop?) that I am actually very good at looking like I'm listening.* ***Jamie, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 1***

Students felt safe acknowledging their weaknesses within journals, as they were able to take ownership of and credit for this observation themselves. This in turn made it easier for students to take responsibility for their practice in ways they had not been able to do previously, even when others had pointed out the same weaknesses to them. Journal reflections from Tom and Jamie illustrate this. Following on from his reflections on his listening skills, Tom remembered another incident where he had received feedback on his practice and linked the two situations together:

> *What is even worse is the fact that I am very quick to offer my opinion, something I really think I should restrain. This was made aware to me by my line manager after he spoke to some of the young people I worked with. He asked them how they found me and they said that I was often trying to be too helpful and not giving them the free-will to learn and discover things for themselves. This shocked me when I heard but my convictions told me that it was true. Immediately, I need to tone my tongue, and as I develop that, I need to tone my mind to focus and listen without background noise getting in the way of potentially important conversations, both in terms of crisis situations and in terms of opportunities to discover more about the young people I work with and the other people who surround me.* ***Tom, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 1***

Not only had Tom had experiences in class which caused him to re-evaluate his view of himself as a listener, he was also able to see how, despite previous feedback about the same issue, he had still not made the progress he had hoped for in his practice. The feedback had a strong affective impact on him – '*This shocked me'* – and his continuation *'but my convictions told me that it was true'* suggested that he had needed to work with himself to move beyond the feelings of shock to a point where his deeper convictions allowed him to recognise the validity of the feedback. Although the feedback from his line manager had made him aware of his habit, it had not necessarily enabled him to make the changes to his practice he wanted. Reading Lindahl's theories about listening helped Tom to recognise and own his listening habits. Writing the journal enabled him to connect all these pieces together – to

reflect on and evaluate himself in the light of theory, to re-connect with previous feedback he had found challenging, to identify where he needed to improve and then to commit to making an informed and specific change in his practice.

Similarly, Jamie continued to reflect on what he was learning about himself and his practice through the classes, and, like Tom, journals were a place where he made overt links between his own realisations and things that others had previously said to him. In his third learning journal, he wrote:

> *Through the 3-minute periods I really felt like I was just scrabbling for things to say. It felt uncomfortable. Was this because I don't like silence? […] This whole experience I think has really taught me something new about myself, or maybe just affirmed something I thought I knew, because people have pointed it out to me about how I will always do or say something, or make a random noise just to break a seemingly awkward silence. Chances are, the other person in the conversation probably isn't finding the experience as awkward as I am…why do I find silence awkward?* ***Jamie, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 3***

Jamie spoke of his learning about himself as something both 'new' and yet familiar – something he already '*thought he knew*' about his habit of breaking a silence, as others had previously made him aware of it. However, the way Jamie journaled about it suggests the quality of his 'knowing' previously (a knowing 'of' or 'about') was different to the way he 'knew' it at that point – like Tom, he had come to a self-recognition and understanding of it, one which he owned, accepted and appropriated for himself. It was this deeper level of knowing that prompted Jamie to reflect further and seek out ways to work on changing his habit. In his fifth journal Jamie chose to reflect on the questions that had arisen for him from his third journal, which he said '*I think I can answer now*'. In this journal, he recognised a number of factors which had led him to find silence awkward, including a misunderstanding of what makes for good conversation, and his concerns about being judged by others as a poor conversationalist and therefore a poor youth worker:

> *And as a youth worker, I've always felt like I've had to be a good conversationalist, and as I said above, in the past this meant that I had to have things to say all the time. […] When there's a lull in the conversation I do feel awkward […] now I think that it's a result of me thinking that those I am talking to are judging me…which may be true for all I know. Lately I've been much more conscious of this in my approach to conversations, and as much as I do feel awkward when there are silences, it's so liberating to know (even if the other person does not), that I don't have to try to live up*

> *to an image that I think the other person is putting on me (or maybe that I'm putting on myself?).* ***Jamie, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 5***

At the end of his reflection, Jamie talked about being 'liberated' from his wrong thinking and his fear of being judged, a liberation which enabled him to begin to 'be conscious' in his practice in order to address his habit. Jamie had to do significant work with himself – his frameworks for thinking, understanding of theory and his concerns about being judged – to get to this point and journals proved a useful tool for him to do this. In that respect, it could be said that he demonstrated elements of 'deep learning', a term coined by Marton & Säljö (1976a; 1976b) to describe the process of '*drawing on personal experiences and course material to make new meaning for [himself]*' (Dyer & Hurd, 2016:289). Although the theory supporting the deep and surface learning model is contested (Howie & Bagnall, 2013), the ability to make connections between theory, experience and self; and then make changes in practice in the light of this in the way that Jamie outlines, certainly seemed to represent *significant* learning for Jamie – learning that has had a *deep* effect on him, his understanding of himself and his actions.

As can be seen in the above examples, students' learning about themselves and their habits prompted them to think about how these were already borne out in their youth work practice or how they envisaged them shaping their practice. They instinctively made links between who they were as people and who they were as practitioners working with young people.

> *I feel as though, the more I do this particular exercise, the more I will discover, or even affirm about myself.* ***Jamie, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 2***

> *I have started to see how effective reflection is, that when I reflect on my practice, my everyday life and myself it helps me to improve my approaches and develop my ideas and values. It also helps me as I become more aware of how my values have a massive impact on what I do and how I deal with situations […] I am massively benefiting from discovering and questioning who I am and reflecting on what and how my surroundings have had an affect on who I am as it is helping me to see what perceptions, values I bring to situations.* ***Cate, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 3***

> *It was beneficial for me to understand how much of what I do influences who I am and what I can bring as an individual to the world churches and the community in which I live in.* ***Dani, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 5***

As students continued to practice reflection skills though the paired work in class and through journals, they began to appreciate the value of the practice: in both understanding some of their own habits and thinking patterns, but also in understanding and appreciating how this shaped their practice. Jamie's comment about his ability to *discover* and *affirm* more about himself through the process of paired work and journaling is noteworthy. Other students found the process affirming, both of themselves and their considered opinions.

> *This week during our one to one meetings, I seemed to find that I am able to answer the question "who am I" better than the previous weeks. […] I find that I am now more open to say what makes me 'me' and the circumstances that have shaped me. I think there is some kind of power in digging deep in one's ocean of secrets and sharing stuff that is sometimes protected by everyday business. In doing so, you kind of positively affirm it within yourself, given [sic] you a sense of validation.* ***Emmanuel, Group C, Advocacy Learning Journal 3***

> *I have found the journals really useful as it has made me think through the stuff that we have been chatting about and the stuff that I have read for the class and allowed me analyse my thoughts and also re-asses my standing on things but also to affirm my standing on things to.* ***Paige, Group A, Advocacy Learning Journal 10***

Developing a confidence in oneself as a practitioner is an important professional attribute, one which journaling supported. Journals were valuable in enabling students to honestly self-evaluate their practice and to work with previous feedback without the complications of the initial emotional impact. Being able to recognise one's weaknesses AND to also be able to identify how to make changes to one's practice is both empowering and affirming.

8.5 Growing Awareness of Difference

reflecting on their awareness of 'otherness' and difference, both in people's experiences and their approach to youth work, which they sought to make sense of.

Becoming aware of difference and of 'the other' was a significant theme that emerged throughout the interviews and this was evidenced in student journals, where students both identified differences, processed their emotional responses to difference and sought to make sense of this (see Chapter Seven). As the audience for journals was primarily the students themselves, and what they wrote was not being assessed, students were often incredibly candid and personal, in ways they might not have been within more typical class

discussions. This is evident in the excerpts from journals quoted above and from Laura's below, which highlights a key challenge of working with issues of difference: that of fear.

> *Some of my prejudices are based on negative encounters as people I have met from some cultures have caused me to feel unsafe or fear them. The more people you meet from a culture the clearer an idea you have about what practices and traditions belong to that culture. Negative encounters can be replaced by positive conversations you have when mixing with people [...] some practices which might seem alien to you are more acceptable once you understand the thinking and reasoning behind them.* ***Laura, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 5***

Laura sought to interrogate her prejudices to find the root of them: she framed this root as negative encounters that left her feeling unsafe or fearful. Burghardt and Tolliver (2010:228) observe that:

> while there are exceptions, almost all of us remember our first experience with "difference" as a negative one: a telling moment in which the world's axis shifted and altered our perspective. [...] As children, we almost always do not know how to respond to this sense of difference, except with confusion, fear and isolation. These first experiences are the foundation of a social psychological response of awkwardness and unconscious fear to difference that is separate from any cultural connotations (that may be added later).

This is a helpful analysis of the root of some of our fears when working with people who we perceive as 'different' to or 'other' than us. Loughran (2006:95) notes, in the context of teacher education, that student teachers observed what they 'expected to see' and transferred their feelings and thoughts about prior classroom experiences onto what they were observing in new settings. It is possible that this sort of transference of feelings about a past experience onto a similar but unique new situation happens in daily life, such as Laura's journal reveals. The relative 'safety' of the journal enabled Laura to observe her fear. There is clearly more work Laura could have done here to critically re-examine the encounters to which she referred; and to think more carefully and critically about what it was that led to her feelings of fear and insecurity, in particular the role her socialisation, identity and media stereotypes played in creating that 'expectation' of insecurity and fear in her. Having said that, the journals offered her a space to verbalise her prejudice and to begin to reframe her experience in a way more appropriate to her adulthood and her professional self. It also afforded her an opportunity to become aware of the process of (critical) re-evaluation and re-framing she worked through: this is the same process she would support young people

through, in her role as a youth worker. It is important for youth workers to be proficient in using these critically reflective processes to help young people navigate them (Young, 2006:110).

The process of recognising and accepting difference began with an understanding of the uniqueness and therefore the limitations of students' own experiences. This led to a greater openness toward the different experiences of others, initially in relation to students in the class and then beyond.

> *I was quite surprised to find that my partner who was around the same age of me [had] such a different experience of education. I first expected that we would have experienced the same education style as we both have gone through our education at the same time, although in different contexts and surroundings. It illuminated to me the way in which we can all be so different and the massive impact our contexts and surroundings have on us and who we are.* ***Cate, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 3***

> *When we were talking my colleague introduced a very important topic about himself, that of identity. This was quite an interesting subject to both of us because we are both of African origin but living abroad. His situation was a bit confusing, even to him. Although both his parents are from Africa; they originated from two different countries hence why he could not explain who he is exactly because of the mixed identities linked to him of both his parents.* ***Tonde, Group C, Advocacy Learning Journal 4***

> *I have found this is maybe a recurring theme in my journals, but coming from [Xxtown] culture, I have had very little exposure and experience with those who are from different faith backgrounds and ethnicities. When I was younger, this real bred a lot of ignorance, and I suppose ill feeling to those that weren't like my friends or I.* ***Jamie, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 9***

Both Cate and Tonde were working with partners for whom a similarity of experience could have been assumed, but through the paired listening, they noticed the uniqueness of their experiences. Through his time journaling, Jamie had come to realise how sheltered and partisan his childhood experience had been. The key issue here is that students were able to articulate, process and 'rehearse' these ideas in a safe space, to express their surprise at difference without condemnation, therefore enabling them to focus on and own their new learning, rather than defending a position they themselves were uncertain of against a negative outside voice, because they felt it was an attack on them personally.

> *The 'one on one' enables two people to connect to a different level than group work, there is less judgement and opinions can be expressed without too much misinterpretation. Less misinterpretation means more understanding of circumstance and understanding of thought. Through understanding relationship grows and so a realisation of similarities and differences comes about. This often means a developed respect and trust.* ***Robert, Group A, Advocacy Learning Journal 1***

The understanding of difference within the class group and their ability to both manage and work constructively with this difference appeared to enable students to process differences of experience and identity in more diverse contexts and to think about how this would relate to their work. As students' awareness grew of the impact that socialisation, experience and identity had in shaping their life experiences and understanding of the world, they began to connect this new critical perspective to their understanding of young people and their work with them. Cate made a direct link in her reflection: from her realisation that a colleague she identified closely with had, contrary to her expectations, experienced life differently to her; to the fact that this might also be true of the young people she worked with.

> *Overall I think one of the biggest things I have got from this is that it is showing and reminding me of just how different we all are and how things around us affect who we are and how I really need to be aware of this in my practice as young people all have very different contexts and backgrounds and to be sensitive to these things when working with them, understanding that they may come to things from a different angle then me and I need to understand that.* ***Cate, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 3***

This evidences the development of a value base that respects others' experiences and gives space for them to describe how they experience life, a core tenet of youth work, drawn from Freire's pedagogy (1972). From this position, students showed a willingness to understand perspectives that they had not come across previously, or had been represented to them in unhelpful ways, again recognising the limits of their own life experiences in helping them understand others'. Students used the journals to expose and explore positions or past actions in a way that would probably be difficult to do without some form of censure in a group environment. The journals were a space for extended thinking, where students felt able to freely articulate their past experiences and actions, how they thought and felt about these and the way they shaped their practice. Jamie's journal on disability is a good example of this and is quoted here in full.

> *For the longest time, I know I've very much subscribed to the worldly view of disability, that if someone is physically deficient in any way they are, by definition, disabled. I*

grew up very much with a very negative view of disabled people in addition to this. In my youth I frequently pretended to be handicapped to make fun of my friends if they did something stupid for example. Many of my friends did this as well…as far as I was concerned, it was normal. It's not something I'm particularly proud of, and definitely does not affect my view of disabled people now.

In spite of this, it has affected my behaviour around them I think. Being a very active, able-bodied person, I've always felt guilty when talking with physically disabled people. I'm not sure why I feel this guilt really…is it because I feel as though they won't like me due to what I can do? I've found that I struggle to make conversation with disabled people because of this stumbling block. A lot of the time I find it easiest to make initial contact with young people through some kind of activity like pool or table tennis, so I find myself at a loss when the young person I want to talk to is incapable of taking part. On the flipside, I don't know if I should be sympathetic towards them or feel sorry for them or something, but I don't want to come across as patronising either.

I found it interesting that some disabled people did not see themselves in anyway as disabled. For example in the Humphries/Lichy interview, Lichy saw himself as fully-able within the deaf community. I had no idea that this was a commonality. I suppose it really shows my ignorance in this issue. Like I said above, it's something that I've never really had to deal with, but definitely a kind of work that I'd like to experience. I know I don't know how to communicate particularly well with disabled people…I wouldn't imagine it's hugely different to any other person, but there is very much that mental block for me that I need to learn to get past. But this will only come with experience.
Jamie, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 8

In this example we can see the process Jamie went through in thinking about his socialisation towards 'disability' as a concept and 'disabled' people in reality, based on a deficit 'medical' model (DRC & CERES, 2004:95-96); and his recognition that even though he believed this upbringing did not affect his general view of disabled people in the present, it had affected his confidence in his ability to engage with people who had a disability. Although Jamie's exploration remained at a personal level (he had not critically considered a structural context), this processing enabled Jamie to move on from the person he was and the actions he took then. The central paragraph demonstrates the impact people's emotions can have on their work if not processed appropriately; and therefore the importance of creating a psychologically safe space for students to acknowledge and explore their emotional responses to people, situations and issues. In this example, Jamie considered the influence of his feelings of guilt about his own abilities, on his capacity to interact with people with a physical disability, recognising that his own physical abilities and interests had a significant part in shaping his practice and engagement strategies. Within the journal, Jamie began a conversation with himself about his past actions, his guilt, his ignorance and his uncertainty,

one that he might not have been able to do in a more traditional group discussion about disability with other students. Despite his occasionally clumsy phraseology, Jamie grappled with his self-owned inadequacies, uncertainties – *'I find myself at a loss when the young person I want to talk to is incapable of taking part'* – and his unfamiliarity. At the same time, he sought to understand how others saw themselves (different to how he had assumed they might) and how they experienced the world; and he sought to assimilate these new ways of 'seeing' people into his frameworks for thinking. In this context, Jamie was able to freely identify and own his lack of awareness and his 'mental block' and, within the context of the journal, he did not feel the need to defend, shy away from or make excuses for that. He was also able to formulate a desire to overcome his own shortcomings, which he acknowledged would need to be 'practiced', through his comment *'this will only come with experience'*. His work in this journal created a foundation for that 'practice'.

8.6 Processing Theory and Linking it to Practice

relating theory explored as part of the module to their youth work practice; and thinking through what they might do with this learning in practice.

The journals were particularly helpful in supporting students to process theory that was new to them and outside their then current experience. Jamie's journal (above) is one example of how students began to understand theory and relate it both to their life experience and their practice; in some cases, like Jamie, seeking to understand how the former shaped the latter.

Jamie used the journal space to explore his growing understanding of the two models[3] of disability (DRC & CERES, 2004:95-96). He instantly recognised the medical or 'deficit' model from his life experience; and through listening to the experience of Lichy, a man with a profound hearing impairment, he began to understand the 'social' model, as described in Lichy's experience. Lichy's view, in common with many other disabled people, that he did not see himself '*in anyway as disabled … [but] as fully-able within the deaf community'* was

[3] The medical or 'deficit' model of disability attributes the barriers experienced by disabled people solely in terms of the disabled persons medical or physical condition, for example, the inability to access a building with stairs, would be seen as the disabled person's problem i.e. because they are unable to walk they can't get up the stairs.
The 'social' model, developed and adopted by the disabled people's movement, makes a specific distinction between an individual's medical or physical condition (impairment) and the experiences of disabled people because of discrimination. This model recognises that if a disabled person uses a wheelchair, then they are denied access to the building because of the stairs or the absence of a lift, i.e. it is the environment that is *disabling*.

one that surprised Jamie; '*I had no idea that this was a commonality'.* At the end of his journal, Jamie showed a growing awareness of theoretical models of disability, an awareness of views that shaped his previous and current practice and a commitment to incorporate his new learning into his future practice.

This pattern is repeated in the journals of other students, particularly in relation to Freire's (1972) pedagogy, as was evident through the interview process. Informal education, based on Freire's educational ideology, can be considered a 'threshold concept' (Meyer and Land, 2006) in youth work, requiring students to engage in intellectual, cognitive and affective work in order to grasp the educational paradigm shift it entails. Meyer and Land (2006:3) write:

> A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view.

The re-framing of the teacher-student dynamic and associated power relations as advocated by Freire and embodied in the praxis of informal education were particularly challenging for some students to grasp. This can be seen in students' struggle to move from an understanding of youth work where power resides with the worker, who manages, tells, regulates and controls young people; to one where the worker seeks to tip the balance of power in favour of the young person (Davies, 2015) and where working processes are characterised by listening, exploring, dialogue, mutual learning and negotiation. Freire's pedagogical theories were introduced to and explored with students in the Advocacy module; both through the subject content and through the module methods. Journals became a valuable place for students to safely occupy and navigate the 'liminal space' required for them to process and master various elements of informal education.

During the third class, having been introduced to Freirian pedagogy (1972), the pairs were asked to work on the question, '*To what extent do you view yourself as a critical co-investigator in dialogue with 'the teacher'?'* (Freire, 1972:54). Laura wrote of her class experience and subsequent reading:

> *Interestingly, as we talked about Freire's theory that students are "co-investigators" with their teachers, I really struggled. Some part of me was not convinced that I would have anything to offer a teacher. Surely, they would have more knowledge than me and therefore already be aware of anything I would try to contribute? Having considered it more and read the chapter of Freire's book I have changed my mind. My experiences and reflections are unique. I am able to challenge what may be the status quo and such an insight might be valuable to a teacher.*
>
> *Equally, I have been challenged in my attitude towards working with young people. I hardly ever expect to gain anything during a session from them. And yet if I have this expectation of them, they may well fulfill it. By making it clear that I believe that I will learn from them they may contribute more. They will not view themselves as I have been viewing myself, as having nothing to offer.* ***Laura, Group B, Advocacy Learning Journal 3***

The theory introduced in class about the nature of knowledge and teacher-student relationships contradicted Laura's received beliefs and her own lived experience of these issues, sparking within her an internal struggle and propelling her to 'work with' her perplexity and to think and read further. Her journaling provided an opportunity for her to examine her affective response (the feeling of struggle) and articulate the questions that gave rise to it; and to then spend time ordering her reflections on the topic having read and considered further. Her questions were of a deeply personal, rather than abstract nature: her difficulty with the theory was rooted in her own experiences and her belief about herself – '*Part of me was not convinced that I would have anything to offer a teacher*' – a belief which she needed to evaluate and re-frame before she could begin to accept and assimilate the theory into her practice. Laura was quickly able to relate her values about herself to her work with young people, articulating how this shaped her view of young people and therefore her practice – *'I hardly ever expect to gain anything … from them [young people]'.* To be able to apply this theory to her practice not only required Laura to understand it intellectually, but to 'know' it viscerally – through her experience and senses – in order to re-frame her attitudes and habits, which in this case required her to change her beliefs about herself. It was from this 'knowing' (what Freire calls 'conscientisation' – a radical reflexivity and critical awareness of oneself and the world in a dialectical relationship) that Laura was able to recognise and understand how her former beliefs had been shaped, how these unconsciously shaped her youth work, and how her newly assimilated learning could impact her youth work practice. She used herself as a bridge to understanding the theory in relation to how it could (arguably should) play out with young people; she moved beyond her own experiences of the teacher and student dynamic to review how this might affect her attitude towards her work with

young people, laying the foundations for change in her future practice. This interestingly foreshadows the struggles Laura had with both the concept and practice of empowerment; issues she spoke about at some length in the interviews and also in her practice journals for the Informal Education module.

Laura's writing is not untypical of the quality of journals received from students on the module, including those not involved in the interviews, who sought to relate their learning about themselves and about theory to each other and to their practice.

8.7 Conclusion

The Advocacy learning journals showed students' work in beginning to wrestle with value issues and principles in youth work, and how they might work these out in practice. Students experienced the journals as a safe space for them to begin a critically reflective self-appraisal of their past and present experiences, their values and their identity, in relation to theory and practice; demonstrating Moon's (2006) assertion that, well-introduced and managed, journal-writing is *'a process that accentuates favourable conditions for learning'*. Journals offered students space to engage in reflective thinking of the order Dewey (1933) describes, fostering an environment where students could stay with perplexity, explore 'forked road' situations and develop meaning without feeling pressured to move on before they were ready. Importantly, they provided a psychologically safe environment for deep, personal exploration that helped students to both own their own learning and affirm themselves as practitioners.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This final chapter reviews the aims of the thesis, draws together the research findings and considers their implications for understanding how students develop their professional values in qualifying education and how educators can effectively support this process. The chapter findings are summarised and key themes, identified by students as helpful in their value development, are highlighted. The research methodology and its impact on the process and findings are also considered. Building on these key themes, I will highlight the implications of the research findings for the practice of educating youth workers, making recommendations for future practice.

The research sought to explore how youth work students develop their professional values during qualifying education. It was a piece of practitioner research, conducted using a longitudinal case study methodology of students studying on a JNC-accredited youth work degree course, taught in a faith-based college, drawing on data from: three interviews with each of the participants at three stages of their education, spanning roughly 18-months; and using data from journals they wrote as part of the teaching and learning strategies of two key modules during this time. The interviews and journals afforded rich data to be collected and analysed through time (Saldaña, 2003) and the reflective nature of the interviews – inviting participants to read and comment on their previous answers in subsequent interviews – gave the participants a unique opportunity to reflect on and review their earlier statements and development in the light of their subsequent knowledge. This gave rise to some surprising and important disclosures around their 'value-talk'; and enabled participants to reflect on their growing sense of self and professional identity and the process of change they perceived they had gone through as a result of their learning.

My research contributes to a greater insight into and understanding of the journey qualifying youth work students undertake in developing their professional values during qualifying education, how students accommodate, work with and reconcile their personal values within the frame of reference of professional work and in particular the role of informal education principles and practices in enabling this synthesis. The need for further study – of how

students developed their professional values in qualifying education, and in particular, how students made the connection between their personal and professional values and the dilemmas created by potential conflicts between the two – was highlighted by Cooper (2007/8:59) in her research. My research builds on Cooper's work and sheds light on how students navigate this process, as well as on students' experience of specific teaching and learning strategies employed in two youth work modules and how they were able to use these for their learning. Although the thesis drew on a relatively small group for the longitudinal interviews, access to journals from a wider body of students evidenced that the experience of developing values described by the interview group was shared more widely. This was also corroborated through informal discussion of findings with qualified youth workers, who recognised the experience of research participants in their own learning journey.

The findings from this research not only make an original contribution to youth worker education – they also have relevance for allied areas of community learning, pastoral and social care work, such as social worker education and clergy formation and training.

The thesis began by recognising the contested nature of youth work, the diverse contexts in which it takes place and, as a result, the variety of values, purposes, principles and practices which underpin the multiplicity of expressions of its practice. For the purpose of this thesis, I outlined youth work as a practice of informal education: where young people choose to be involved; where workers and young people engage in conversation, activities and relationships together, which are life-giving, which enable both parties to learn more about their lives and the world they live in and which contribute towards the promotion of social justice; and where young people's wishes and views are central to this process (de St Croix, 2016; Banks, 2010; Batsleer, 2008; National Youth Agency, 2004).

Chapter Two explored the nature of values in general and more specifically within the occupational and academic literature of youth work, recognising that values development is a complex and on-going process that engages both the intellect and feelings (Cooper 2007/8). It encompasses a variety of skills and dispositions: self-awareness (Moss, 2007), the capacity for critical reflection on self and practice (Schön, 1983, 1991), and for moral philosophizing (Young, 2006), professional wisdom (Banks and Gallagher, 2009), situational sensitivity (Bagnall, 1998) and the ability to develop and change one's practice in the light of one's emerging professional identity. The place and influence of values in youth work

practice was outlined and, as a result of moves to professionalise the practice, the development of a defined and standardised 'suite of youth work values' and an ethical statement, guiding worker conduct (National Youth Agency, 2004) was noted. The chapter reviewed the few pieces of youth work literature alluding to or examining professional values development in youth worker education; examined research in this area from allied professions, such as nursing and social work; and then drew heavily on the principles and practices of informal education (as a practice of moral philosophy) to frame an understanding of values development in youth work and to shape the curriculum.

Chapter Three explored in some depth the development of informal education and its underpinning principles and practices: and Chapter Four explained the rationale underpinning my research approach – a piece of practitioner research, using a longitudinal case study design – the data collection methods utilised, and the opportunities, limitations and ethical issues inherent in these choices.

9.2 Students' Value Development: Reviewing their Journey

9.2.1 Starting out: personal values, motivations and early practice examples

Chapter Five introduced the case being studied: the college in which the research took place, the students who formed the main research group and the development of the curriculum. I outlined how each of the research participants had come to study youth work with a strong motivation and a clear sense of 'story' and vocation as to how and why they had chosen this route, along with an image of the 'kind of youth worker' they wanted to be. This was supported by their own experiences of youth work – as participants themselves in their youth and as young leaders; experiences which significantly shaped their initial understandings of the aims, purposes, practices and values of youth work and the way these were realised (often at this stage unconsciously) in their own practice.

Chapter Six explored in more detail the students' initial value positions and how they implemented these in practice. Although their personal values were broadly consonant with youth work, often articulated as a desire to 'be' a particular kind of youth worker (eg. loving, liberating, inclusive) and to support, help and care for young people, the younger students had a limited understanding of professional youth work values and how these might be

realised in practice. These largely reflected an '*unformed and uninformed concern*' to help people, one which could be generally rather than specifically stated and one usually unconnected to theory or specific insights through reflection on experience (Fook, Ryan & Hawkins, 2000:38-39). Students were nervous talking about professional values – women expressed this more often than the men – and were concerned to give the 'correct' response. This was particularly so with the two students in their second year, who felt they should 'already know this' as a result of their study, yet still demonstrated some level of confusion about professional values. This was less evident in the older student with prior professional caring experience; he evidenced both formed and informed values, alongside a more developed understanding of implementing professional values within a caring profession. Students' personal values and prior experiences influenced the professional values they were able to recall and with which they connected most strongly. At this stage, students felt little tension between their personal values and what they knew of professional values, although they were able to imagine scenarios where there might be value conflicts.

Discussions of values-in-action in practice situations, both theoretical (through a youth work scenario) and situations they had encountered in their practice revealed students' concern with their performance: to do the best for young people by fulfilling their duty as a youth worker and to perform 'correctly'; to be accountable, with a technical approach to implementing policy, even when that prevented them offering the on-going care they intuitively felt was appropriate; and a desire to exert and retain control in situations with young people in order to ensure the workers' perception of a good outcome for young people. In the early stages of their training, students' practice, and on occasion their espoused values, revealed their concern to take action that they believed was beneficial to young people, coupled with their thinking that 'adults know best', or at least that they were expected to 'know best' in relation to young people. Students largely understood their role as one of: organising activities and programmes of learning for young people; regulating and managing young people's behaviour in these settings and in their wider lives; 'resolving' issues on young people's behalf; and supporting young people through giving advice, which in practice was 'telling' young people what they thought young people should do. As a result, workers' focus was primarily on their own judgements of young people's actions based on what they saw and understood of young people's behaviour and situations. Some students – particularly the younger ones and the men – evidenced a felt pressure or impulse to step in and 'do something now', to manage and resolve difficult situations, before reflecting on options (Collander Brown, 2010:52-3). Exploration of young people's own thoughts and

feelings about their experiences and the motivations for their actions was largely an afterthought, if it existed at all. Students' values of care and concern for young people were frequently interpreted in such a way as to justify the punitive action they advocated or took to ensure desired behaviour, for example framing action as '*tough love'*, to stop the escalation of bad behaviour, thus preventing worse outcomes in the future. Resolutions to difficult issues, poor behaviour or conflicts, particularly those that arose within the youth work setting, were not negotiated with young people but were decided, by workers, on their behalf and then relayed to young people, albeit with some concern to do so as sensitively as possible where appropriate, but still with an expectation that advice would be implemented. The use of the word 'challenge' to frame this element of practice – for example, '*that behaviour needs challenging*' and '*I would have challenged the young person'* – gave a somewhat adversarial feel to their planned or intended encounters, reminiscent of an authoritarian approach to schooling, or the negative media coverage of young people; even when they sought to do this kindly, it was clear workers hoped for, expected and sometimes demanded adherence to their planned action. This perhaps was a misunderstanding of how the term 'challenge' is commonly used as a short-hand in youth work to refer to the youth workers' role in working with and exploring the attitudes and behaviours of young people that workers judge do not make for human flourishing, for example, racist or sexist attitudes or behaviours.

Discussions of the youth work scenario revealed students' thinking about 'idealised' youth work responses, almost entirely free from an awareness of how context and their own feelings might influence their judgements, capacities and actions in the situation. This was significantly different to students' accounts of their own practice situations, which were full of contextual detail and their own emotions; although at this stage, these accounts were not particularly critically reflexive. The importance of working with real practice situations and the worker's emotional responses to them became a more important feature of the research as it progressed.

9.2.2 Developing values: values literacy, espoused values and values-in-action

Chapter Seven described, explored and analysed students' developing:

- values literacy – students' ability to discuss values;
- 'espoused' values – students' personal and professional values, how these interacted and the values students said they would draw on in practice scenarios; and

- 'values-in-action' – how students drew on and actually realised values in their own practice and the factors that impacted on this implementation.

Throughout the research journey, students self-identified that they had become much more confident in their understanding of values and more comfortable when discussing their own values and their practice. They still remained somewhat cautious when discussing professional youth work values removed from any practice context, but in all areas, they were much more able to articulate their thinking in more critically reflective and nuanced ways.

Students continued to frame their personal values in relation to their work with young people. In the second interview, students talked about being much more aware of themselves, 'who they were' and the experiences and people who had shaped them and this led them to feel more confident about themselves when in practice. At the same time, students spoke of being more aware of 'difference' and of others and more open to and less afraid of this difference, perhaps as a result of their own increased confidence. They had also begun the process of evaluating their personal values in the light of what they understood of professional values, without discarding their own values. By the third interview, it became much harder to delineate between students' personal and professional values and both began to influence their conceptions of the other. The notion of 'core' and 'subsidiary' values emerged – 'core' values being those personal values that were central to their vocation and professional identity as a youth worker and which took primacy in situations, such as equality, respect, being loving and empowering. Subsidiary values were those that workers chose to retain to guide their own actions in life, for example, particular stances on sex and abortion. Without eschewing them, students held these values more lightly in professional settings, leading with their core values and subordinating their subsidiary values to these core values in a work context, in order to ensure their personal values did not act as a barrier to their work with young people.

At the same time, students talked about how they had begun to value and draw on the principles of informal education in their personal lives, particularly around listening, learning, empowerment and respect for people's right to choose: rather than 'telling' their friends and family what to do, or giving strong advice, they talked of the value of listening, exploring available choices and actions and how these might be navigated *in situ*. The principles and associated practices of informal education were key in enabling students to reconcile

differing value positions between themselves, youth work and the young people they worked with: the concept of dialogue, engaging and 'working with' young people's ideas enabled students to understand that they could hold their own values, work with young people's values AND allow young people to make their own choices (Freire, 1972).

Although students were increasingly able to reference key value concepts related to youth work practice and to consider them critically in relation to their own practice, they talked with marked ambivalence about *the* professional values of youth work in the second and third interviews, in some cases still appearing to view them as an externally imposed set of standards to be assimilated and achieved. Students expressed confusion about the complex and diverse nature of youth work values and how they were realised in practice in a variety of ways. Through reflection on practice they began to recognise the influence on value positions of larger contextual factors, such as workers' personal values, social culture and organisational setting; and contingencies, such as unexpected issues arising within a session and worker emotions in the moment, both in their own and others' practice. Through placement experience, they gradually became disabused of the notion that all youth workers held to 'one' set of professional values, with the exception of values around 'safeguarding' young people, which they viewed as possibly the only universally accepted value across all contexts. Despite this realisation, they still conveyed a felt pressure to 'know' and give 'correct' answers about professional youth work values, largely based around a concern to 'say the right thing' and to meet their own and other people's expectations about their status as a professional.

Until students had developed a way to reconcile their uncertainty around youth work values, they described various strategies for managing values in practice. One such strategy has been referenced above – intuitively categorising their personal values into 'core' and 'subsidiary' values. Another was 'learning the language' of youth work and testing it out in context, literally practising 'youth work talk' 'as if' they were proficient in youth work, whilst not necessarily understanding the meaning and concepts to which they referred (Watts, 2003; 2013). A third, similar approach was described as 'putting on' professional values, or wearing the 'mask' of professionalism, to hide their own views, in order fulfil professional requirements. Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000:182) describe students using such strategies as 'advanced beginners' and Cooper (2007/8:66) suggests these traits are often exhibited by students in second and third year qualifying education.

The ambivalence shown towards discussions of professional values was in marked contrast to students' discussion of '*my* professional values'; a phrase which emerged in the third interview to describe the values and associated approaches to work that the students had appropriated for themselves and were now seeking to realise in their practice. These segments of the final interview were undertaken with much more energy and enthusiasm than the earlier discussions of professional youth work values. Students spoke positively of the 'fit' between their personal and their professional values, crediting this to the remit of the college in 'forming' them into professional youth workers. They also spoke of a process of 'synthesising'; describing the work they were doing to evaluate, critique, integrate and embed into their practice all they had learned about themselves and youth work, referring frequently to the values embodied in the principles and practice of informal education. Some points of tension still remained, although these were described with more critical reflection than previously and largely took the form of ethical dilemmas.

In the final interview through discussion of their practice, and also evident in their informal education learning journals, students described how their approach to youth work had developed. As a result of their growing self-awareness, their ability to reflect on their own practice and their growing knowledge of informal education theory and principles, students began to identify what they termed their 'natural instincts' to 'tell', 'control' and work for quick fix solutions; actions which were frequently based around their need as workers to act to manage young people's behaviour (thereby fulfilling their understanding of the role of a competent worker), often in order to ensure programmes and events ran smoothly. Through the process of learning informal education theory, their understanding of their role and aims shifted to one of: listening in order to understand young people's position; engaging in dialogical exploration of issues instead of telling; respecting young people's right to choose; working with young people's behaviour rather than regulating it; and seeking longer-term solutions, focused on changes in attitude, rather than shorter-term fixes focused on limited behaviour change in specific contexts. Students were more aware of and at ease with the complexities inherent in working with people and sought to work with these rather than reduce them to simplistic binary options.

These changes were also evident in their approach to the youth work scenario: although the general approach they described taking was not notably different across the three interviews, their motivations, intentions, focus and thinking was more nuanced and had developed significantly; impacting their understanding, their specific actions and, in particular, their

ability to recognise and manage their own emotions. In considering their options, they were more reflective, particularly about how they personally might react in such a scenario and they factored this knowledge of self into their proposed intervention. Whereas in previous answers, students were primarily concerned with ensuring they performed competently, in the final interview, they focused on the young person's perspective and how they could best work with this to support the young person, considering the impact of their intervention on the young person's well-being in the longer-term.

These changes are summarised, in a somewhat binary way, in Table 7:

Table 7: Summary of Changes to Youth Work Approach

Focus / practice at start	**Focus / practice at end**
Competent worker	Young person centred
Monological / telling	Dialogical / asking, exploring, mutual learning
Controlling / regulating	Educational / empowering, working with
Starting where workers are	Starting where young people are
Quick fix solutions	Long term considerations
Simplifying complex situations	Acknowledging and working with complexity
Avoiding difficulties	Working with difficulties / being courageous
Working 'instinctively'	Working consciously (working with self)

A surprising tension that emerged in the third interview was students' frustration with their placement settings, evidencing the change their values and practice had undergone. As students embraced and implemented informal educational principles into their practice, students discovered that their newly developed approach was not well understood or supported by the untrained volunteers and workers in their placement settings, leading to annoyance and some disagreements. As workers began to focus less on behaviour management and more on strategies to foster longer-term learning, they became aware of (what they felt to be) the 'disapproving gaze' of their colleagues. As they grew more attuned to how young people experienced their youth work, students spoke of their frustration that their placement youth work sessions – the approach, content, power dynamics between workers and young people and the disciplinary procedures used – were akin to didactic schooling rather than youth work, which left little space for them to work in the way they now wanted. Students found various ways of managing this: from working with volunteers to help them understand more about informal education, to practising informal education in more covert ways in their placement, particularly in one-to-one and small group encounters.

Overall, students described their most significant changes as:

- increased confidence;
- increased knowledge of self and awareness of self in practice;
- ability to reflect and think critically;
- intentionality in practice;
- the synthesis of personal and professional values into 'my professional values';
- their approach to work with young people, implementing informal education practices; and
- their sense of being 'formed' as a youth worker, being the same person, but feeling like a different worker.

However, it was noteworthy that throughout the process, students looked at former answers that they had given honestly at the time, and, in the light of their subsequent knowledge and development, judged them as immature, naïve and simplistic. It is likely that this process may have been replicated if the students had been asked a further year on to review the answers they gave in their final interview, deeming these naïve after a further year of practice in the field. Whilst acknowledging their development, students also recognised their former youth worker selves in their earlier responses: they were the same person, but felt like they had undergone significant changes to become a different worker.

9.3 'Helpful' teaching and learning strategies

Throughout the interviews, whilst discussing their values and practice and what they felt had changed for them, students reflected on how these changes had occurred and what they had found helpful in that process. As well as talking about the impact of the teaching and learning strategies in the two classes I taught, they discussed other aspects of the course, such as:

- meeting with their professional practice tutor and JNC-qualified alternative placement line manager, which enabled two students to learn how to reflect on their practice;
- other classes such as 'Pastoral Studies', which taught students the importance of not giving directive advice and allowing young people space to choose their actions; and 'The Story of God', which enabled a student to re-frame their theology to allow for people's freedom of choice;

- specific teachers who had prompted learning moments for them, such as disclosing value positions that students did not expect, demonstrating a helpful diversity within the college staff team;
- discussing their learning with current and past students; and
- the main and alternative placements, which were significant sites of learning for students, where they were able to reflect critically on their experiences in the light of theory. Students found the diversity of expressions of youth work (and the associated value positions held) somewhat confusing at times, although this was important in extending their vision of the boundaries of youth work and helping them understand the variety of contexts in which youth work takes place. This is one of the factors that enabled students to recognise the need to develop *their* professional values. Students also found it particularly helpful to 'see' youth work values, principles and practices 'in action' – being discussed, realised and evaluated: this gave them a repertoire to aim for and imitate (Jeffs & Smith, 2005:67-8), until they had more understanding of their own practice. This was true even of 'poor' placements offering little demonstration of youth work values – students were able to use these placements for learning where they had opportunity elsewhere to reflect critically on practice in the light of theory.

Although it has not been possible to research further into these elements, I wanted to recognise that the changes that students went through are in no way solely attributable to the classes I taught. Primarily, they are a result of the students' own work within the context of all that the college had to offer. Having said that, students' formal feedback to college on the Advocacy and Informal Education classes consistently indicated that students valued both classes and although they at times found them challenging – the level of work for Informal Education was often a source of consternation for some students – they also commented on how helpful they were, for example:

> *Nice one Helen, I never look forward to your courses beforehand but then continue to be surprised by how much I enjoy them when I'm involved in them. You have a way that is worth persevering with. (Joe, 2010, on re-sitting Informal Education)*

> *The course has encouraged me to consider and challenge my values. I have questioned why and how I want to do youth work. It has also had an impact on conversations outside of work. It has emphasised the importance of learning (2016)*

It was comments similar to Joe's that propelled me to undertake this research. The next section explores what students said explicitly about the methods used in the Advocacy and Informal Education classes.

9.3.1 Paired learning – 'free to just talk and learn more about myself'

When introduced well, students experienced the regulated environment of the paired learning exercise as a safe and freeing space to talk, reflect on and learn more about themselves, supported by a non-interrupting listener. The opportunity to do this without being interrupted was pivotal in enabling students to explore within class aspects of themselves, their identities, values and habits that they might otherwise not have done in a larger group setting: maybe through fear of judgement or simply through being interrupted by a sympathetic listener, eager to share their own, similar experience.

> *in the paired listening [...] because it was my time to talk and I knew that there wouldn't be someone kind of jumping in or going to challenge what I say about myself, I think it made me feel really free to just talking and then, through talking, learning more about myself.* ***Cate, Interview 2***

> *... the paired listening. That was really good too [...] because for me anyway it made me more aware of my own insecurities in just having a conversation with someone and why I feel awkward when there's silence and why I feel the need to say something when there's silence, you know.* ***Jamie, Interview 2***

Not only did this exercise help students learn more about themselves, it enabled them to reflect on themselves in practice and to interrogate their intentions.

> *The paired listening was really helpful [...] just to understand like [...] 'Who am I?' and to really grapple with what you were about and being self aware and how that reflects your youth work [...]. That's really made me really kind of sit back and reflect on myself but also really kind of be open to like 'what am I actually doing?', 'why I am I doing it?' kind of thing. So that's been helpful.* ***Dani, Interview 2***

Weekly consistent practice of this method supported students to develop a habit of reflection that carried over into their practice, as described by Cate below; and to explore the ideas and questions that were relevant and of interest to them, as Joe recounted in an Advocacy learning journal.

The paired listening thing, that was massively helpful with kind of giving me time to think about who I am, and my values and how that affects things, and where they have come from, and out of that I think, because I've been given space here at college to think about it, I've gone out and it becomes kind of like a habit for me. Because I've started kind of getting into that habit of thinking more about things, it comes more natural to me when I'm in my placement rather than having to think "Oh, I need to sit down and reflect now." I'm just naturally doing it. ***Cate, Interview 2***

The questions today that really grabbed my attention were... 'What is your cultural hegemony and to what extent does it support injustice/discrimination against specific groups?' And 'Do I support injustice through participating in it?' These questions were brought to our attention by the critcism [sic] Gramsci makes of western capitalist ideology. I can see now that the previous "naval gazing" has helped us find the tools to see where we stand in such questions before we attempt to "fix" perceived problems within them. ***Joe, Group A, Advocacy Learning Journal 4***

Joe initially struggled with the methods used in the advocacy class – as described in Chapter Eight – and particularly in the time given in class to the paired learning and space to reflect on himself, what he termed 'naval gazing': his preference initially was for a much more didactic approach. However, as he persisted with reflection, he began to recognise the usefulness and importance of knowing and understanding himself, his values and opinions when learning to critique theory and wider social values. The paired learning primarily enabled students to 'see', 'connect' and 'work with' themselves in ways that they had not had the opportunity to before. Staging this opportunity early on in the course was invaluable in supporting students to confidently and openly work with issues of difference, power and oppression from a position of better knowledge of themselves. It also paved the way for learning in the Informal Education module: students had an increased ability to listen, had developed a reflective habit, were far more aware of the impact of 'self' in situations, and had begun to practice the skills of moral philosophising, all of which are vital components in informal education. Their growing understanding of these practices enabled them to support young people to reflect on and learn from their experiences and to engage less defensively in value-based discussions.

9.3.2 Learning journals – 'replaying my life back'

Learning journals were another key tool in supporting students into a reflective habit. They not only enabled them to reflect on themselves and to 'replay back' parts of their past for investigation and learning, they also enabled students to process the emotional aspects of their learning journey and make sense of their experiences in class and in practice.

> *I loved the learning journals. […] doing that module I kind of like was replaying little bits of my life back and trying to apply what we'd said in college.* ***Samuel, Interview 2***

> *I find I have always written journals and stuff so to write my thoughts down was really helpful and that really made me reflect on who I was but also what I learnt.* ***Dani, Interview 2***

> *I think the fact that I had reflected on the previous session and dealt with some of my frustrations in my journal was also helpful. I was able to move on from last weeks feelings. I am beginning to understand now what it means to manage yourself as stated in the youthwork values of the National Youth Agency.* ***Laura, Informal Education Learning Journal 8***

Students discussed the helpfulness of writing regularly – in both classes, journals were written weekly – in enabling them to practice articulating their thoughts on paper and in developing their ability to reflect on themselves and their practice.

> *So it was really nice to do journals every week, which is kind of funny because I don't think I would have said that before. But it just gets you in that mentality of looking at your work and looking at policy and just I guess being a more thought through worker.* ***Laura, Interview 3***

> *The deadlines were good because you didn't want to miss one, but that did help because you got it done instead of leaving them to the last couple of weeks.* ***Jamie, Interview 3***

Jamie's comment reveals the approach some students took to writing their Practice Recordings for their portfolio: students were required to submit ten of these recordings at the end of the year within their Practice Portfolio. Some of the recordings had to be written about specific issues or areas of practice and all had to demonstrate their competency in practice at an appropriate level. Although students were instructed to write these fortnightly, students often left them to the end of the year and they became 'another piece of assessed work to submit', rather than a tool for learning. The difference in students' approach to these recordings and the journals for Advocacy and Informal Education were noted by students in the final interview. Laura's comment explores this further:

> *So I think there is a couple of [differences], I think by doing it [assessed Practice Recordings] every fortnight then you kind of had lots of things happen in a fortnight.*

> *So you have got all of that time and you are umming and ahhing which bit to do, whereas I think every week I'd got in my head right I know one of these sessions there is going to be something I am going to pick to look at more so which one is it going to be and I had that really I guess stuck in my head before doing the sessions or after doing the sessions. I think doing a journal made it easier for me to write about my feelings and what was going on in the situation for me a lot more. I think it just helped me understand reflection a bit more really because I'd kind of been writing it quite, I don't know, in a sort of semi detached way before. Then I think doing a journal it was just like right let's think of everything I possibly can or all my ideas. All the things that could go into this and because it was quite free flowing and just all my thoughts on paper and it felt limited to the 500 words in the same way, not that I have felt that before, but I think all my thoughts just flowed better and so then I was able to pick out things and go "Right that is a good bit, that is just waffle".* ***Laura, Interview 3***

Laura talked about the freeing aspect of journals in enabling her to consider 'everything' as potential learning material for her reflection, including all her thoughts and feelings. There is a danger that students can write in a purely descriptive and uncritical way in such journals, although I would argue that students need to learn to write like this initially, in order to then begin to exercise critical judgment about what they choose to focus on and explore. Laura had begun to develop this skill of discerning profitable material from which to learn, evidenced by her comment about 'picking out things' to focus on, recognising the rest was 'just waffle'. It is also vital that students learn to write for themselves and their own learning, as well as writing to meet external criteria. I see these as two different skills. Laura acknowledged the 'semi-detached', disinterested way in which she approached her Practice Recordings, compared with the engaged, 'free-flowing' way she describes writing her Advocacy learning journals. It is also notable that she was able to use the Advocacy journals to connect with and explore her emotions, a key skill in values development and in developing as a reflective practitioner, able to consciously use and manage self in practice.

9.3.3 Reflecting on students' own real-life practice

What seemed to help students most relate the values of youth work to their practice was reflecting on their own practice in the light of theory, with the support of a tutor: both within the classes – where we used the 'Exploration of Practice Groups' in the Informal Education classes (Belton & Frost, 2010:9-10) – and in the learning journals, written about their practice, again as part of the Informal Education module. Through feedback on their learning journals, predominantly through questions, students used journals to examine and explore what was going on for them in practice, with some feedback and questions from me.

Students were clear that they experienced these informal education learning journals very differently to the Practice Recordings for their Portfolios, even though the content of both was practice. The function of the Practice Recordings was to: demonstrate their competence in practice for their JNC qualification; and that they could think and write academically about their practice. As a result, students felt under some pressure in these recordings to evidence good practice, rather than to explore their learning. They were aware they were writing for an external audience who was responsible for grading their work, rather than for themselves and their own benefit. Cate noted that the assessed nature of the Practice Recordings had the effect of inhibiting her honesty: *'I felt like it was a bit more like I were going to be judged on it, or I felt a bit more like I didn't want to open up as much'*, (Cate, Interview 2). This encouraged students to present as their practice a picture of the good practice they imagined was required to receive a JNC qualification, particularly in the early stages of their training before they were more self-confident as a practitioner: but it did not necessarily foster an environment where practitioners could recognise, own and take responsibility for their mistakes or less good practice and where they could explore the messy parts of practice.

The difference between exploring practice issues through the use of youth work scenarios and exploring the actual practice of students also emerged in the interviews. In two cases, Laura had encountered a similar situation in her own practice to the one outlined in a youth work scenario. One situation was similar to the scenario I brought to interviews for students to reflect on (see Appendix 3): this was a 'real-life' scenario, in as much as it had happened to an unknown worker at some point; but in essence it was a context-free scenario. Students were able to use the scenario to think through 'ideal-type' youth work approaches and responses, but were forced to do this without any context, and often did it without any reference to how they themselves might feel in the situation. This was very clearly highlighted in the way Laura spoke about the similar real-life situation she had been in, with great awareness of her own emotions and the impact they had on her actions (see Chapter Six, page 169). Although the function of the youth work scenario in the interview was to explore students' value positions, rather than to foster learning about practice, it clearly also revealed the extent to which context and contingency impacts workers' ability to realise their values in action.

The second instance of this arose in interview two, where Laura was describing a situation in which she had drawn on her values: two drunk young women came to the youth club and she immediately made a choice to ask them to leave. In this discussion she remembered that she

had previously explored an almost identical scenario in class, prior to the incident in her practice. She recounted, with some amusement, that in practice she had done the opposite of what she had advocated in the class discussion, where she had described inviting them into the hypothetical club, giving them coffee, calming them down and ensuring their safety. She realised this shortly after she had sent the girls on their way.

> *And afterwards I was just like, whoa, how did I decide that, that was completely not … that was not how we rehearsed it. Which was brilliant, but yeah, that was just shocking for me. I think I'd done it without even thinking and yeah, I sat down afterwards and went, well why?* ***Laura, Interview 2***

On exploring why this was, Laura identified the stressful situation she had been – an understaffed youth club, uncertainty about organisational policy, and just having broken up a fight, resulting in asking a young person to leave the club. How she had been feeling '*came into it quite a lot actually'*, when she instinctively made the decision that she and the other workers could not manage the drunk young women and the rest of the young people safely. Clearly 'case study scenarios' can be helpful in the way Laura described, in supporting beginner youth workers to develop a sense of what 'ideal-type' practice might look like and in prompting reflection, as in the situation above, when workers' actual practice deviates from their 'espoused' practice. However, it is imperative to also reflect on real-life practice examples, to support students to recognise, explore and understand why they took the action they did and the values, contextual and contingent factors that led to their action, so that students can learn from and improve their practice and themselves as a practitioner.

9.3.4 Impact of the research process

Reflecting on the additional elements of the research process, namely the interviews, participants observed that elements of the interview process had been useful in supporting their value development. They particularly valued the space to review their journey into youth work and make connections between their background, prior experience and the motivations for seeking to enter the profession. The extended one-to-one time in the interviews established great familiarity and trust between the students and myself as their tutor, which was of benefit to us both through the two modules I taught. The process of discussing values over time, re-visiting and reflecting on their former value positions, enabled students to recognise their development and to critique their former positions, giving them a strong sense of and confidence in their developing identity as a professional

practitioner. It is worth considering how some of this can be replicated in the ordinary teaching cycle.

9.4 Implications of this Study on Fostering Values Development in Youth Work

9.4.1 Space for students to reflect on self

This research points to the importance of creating space in Youth Work courses that enables students to firstly reflect on themselves, to recognise, understand and self-evaluate their own prior experiences and value positions. Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000:200-201) asserted:

> The curriculum needs to take account of the learning which takes place before students enter the formal educational setting. Taylor (1997:39-41) makes pertinent points about how education needs to address the ways in which pre-course personal knowledge affects the understanding, interpretation and application of propositional professional knowledge.

The paired learning strategy used in the Advocacy module is one way of offering this space: free journal writing is another. Journals enable students to process many aspects of their learning, in particular, their emotions, which do not often receive attention in academic classes. Both the paired learning and journals were valued by students in this study. Using two methods in parallel offered students different access points to learning reflection-on-self. Group work does not easily achieve this task in what can become highly charged discussions around identity. The benefits for students of increased self-awareness were increased confidence and openness to others and to difference: to others' feelings, experiences and ideas, and to situations. Key to this endeavour was supporting students to listen: both to their own inner world – to recognise, explore, process and evaluate their own experiences and values; and to listen to others' experiences.

9.4.2 Space for students to reflect on self within the curriculum, without assessment

This study endorsed Cooper's (2007/8) findings that assessment creates significant anxiety in students, particularly those in the early stages of their course, leading them to be less than open about their real values, their struggles, their thinking and their practice. Cooper's

(*ibid*:70) solution to this issue was to find space outside the formal course structure in which students could participate voluntarily in dialogue about values. I am concerned that this solution appears to relegate the central role values play in youth work to a peripheral position, suggesting that reflection on values is an activity in which practitioners can choose (or not) to engage, rather than a core professional competency occupying a central place in the course. Youth work educators have to find ways to facilitate such value discussion and critique within the formal curriculum, retaining the central role values play in youth work practice, whilst at the same time fostering environments which maximise the likelihood for students to be as honest as possible about their values development. My research shows that it is possible to create 'safe enough' environments in which students can participate in the deep and personal engagement, reflection and learning that Cooper and I agree is essential to values development.

I advocate here that it is helpful to students' learning to reduce the assessment criteria as much as possible for modules which seek to foster values development; this supports students to focus on the processes of learning rather than on instrumentally meeting a pre-defined set of outcomes. In the case of this study, the weekly journal element of the Advocacy module was compulsory but not assessed: the discipline of writing and submitting them weekly on time earned the pass grade for that element of the module assessment. As a result, students wrote for themselves and wrote candidly about their learning journey, their struggles and their value positions in relation to their practice, their life, current affairs and various forms of discrimination. The student presentations at the end of the module, documenting their learning through the module, was also assessed as pass/fail; this again allowed students to focus on critically evaluating their learning and development in particular areas, rather than on reaching an externally imposed standard to achieve a 'good grade'. There are no doubt other creative ways of fostering environments conducive to values development within formal and Higher Education settings, although I am conscious that changes in HE over the past twenty years now mitigate against such curriculum design, with their attention to pre-determined learning outcomes, formative and summative assessments and 'word-pots'.

9.4.3 An awareness of the gap between language and understanding

This research evidenced that students became familiar with and utilised the 'language' of youth work before they had a reasonable understanding of the principles and practices that those concepts denote. This is not surprising: and it is important for students to practice

using youth work language, as this is how they learn to use it accurately and precisely to describe situations, values, decisions and actions. However, in the early stages, this suggests it is important not to assume too much as educators and to support students to explore the meaning behind the youth work terms they are using, not only in abstract ways – '*What do you mean by empowerment? What does this look like in your practice*' – but specifically how concepts are realised within practice settings.

9.4.4 Space for students to reflect on their own real-life practice

This leads into the importance of enabling students in training to openly reflect on their own practice. Students bring to training a repertoire of examples and experiences of work with young people that are frequently shaped by non-youth work paradigms, for example formal schooling and the informal, quick-fix, simplistic approaches to 'helping' people who are facing problems, drawn from pop-psychology and agony aunts (Fook, Ryan & Hawkins, 2000:153-4). As these paradigms are not always obvious in superficial discussions of practice, it is useful for educators to be aware of this. Informed by the principles and practices of informal education, students need to be supported to scrutinise and critically evaluate their prior and current youth work experiences and the practice 'habits' they have unconsciously acquired through a process of socialisation, to name, understand and where appropriate change their practice.

Individual and group reflection on real-life practice situations are both helpful for students in enabling them to learn more about themselves as a practitioner and how they are realising their professional values in their practice. Individual reflection might draw on methods such as reflective recordings, journals and supervision; group reflection with other workers might use the 'Exploration of Practice' method used in this study, supporting students to consider real practice issues within a 'community of practice', preparing them for professional practice. Youth work scenarios (descriptions of 'typical' situations a worker may find themselves in) are helpful in enabling students to envision 'ideal-type' practice, but they do not allow for workers to recognise and explore the contextual and contingent factors, including their own emotions and visceral responses to situations, that inevitably have an impact on their actual decisions in action. Reflection on their own practice enables this contextualised reflection and supports students to learn more about themselves as practitioners: how they think and respond in particular situations, providing learning which can be transferred contextually to other situations (Schön, 1983, 1991; 1987).

9.4.5 Staging students' learning

The students' values development was clearly shaped by the course design: their increasing self-awareness preceded their understanding of themselves as practitioners, as the methods which supported reflection on self were taught before the focus on their practice. However, feedback from the research participants strongly evidenced that this was a helpful way to stage the learning opportunities. Learning how to reflect on themselves and developing an increased self-awareness gave students confidence to be more open to others, to difference and to complexity. This was clearly helpful when it came to examining their youth work practice and considering how they implement theory in their practice. Focusing on self first was helpful. However, Cooper's (2007/8) research highlights that students in the early stages of their training are primarily focused on seeking to establish a successful identity as a student, so, although it is important to create this space for reflection in the first year of study, perhaps the first term of the first year is not the optimal time to do this.

9.5 Concluding Remarks

This final chapter has summarised: the aims of the research – to investigate how youth work students develop their professional values during qualifying education – and the methods used in the investigation; reviewed participants' value development; outlined the teaching and learning methods which students found helpful in this process; and suggested some implications, drawn from the findings, for educators teaching youth workers, which I have myself sought to put into practice. I continue to teach the two modules: and to work with myself to improve my own practice and with the college to improve the curriculum design. Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination, a title I inherited, has been retitled Power and Anti-Oppressive Practice. On my recommendation, Power and Anti-Oppressive Practice is now offered annually for youth work students to take in the second semester of their first year; and Informal Education is also offered annually in the first semester of youth work students' second year, so youth work students have some youth work practice experience to draw from, but still have enough of their placement remaining to implement and 'practice' their learning. Sadly, I have not been as successful in negotiations with the university that accredits the degree element of the course. On re-validating the Advocacy module, university administrators insisted that students receive a grade, rather than a pass/fail mark, for the module, despite evidence to the contrary put forth by the college and myself. The

university questioned how students would learn and improve if they were not given an academic grade for their work; and, in any case, the university rubric no longer allowed for pass/fail modules, in part as they did not meet the expectations of students and the more recent (market-led) thinking about teaching and learning. My research demonstrates the opposite: that in a supportive, non-judgemental yet critically reflective environment, where learning about self and for self is emphasised and prioritised over achieving a good academic grade, students do learn profoundly about themselves and their practice, learning which they value for its own sake. We have been able to retain both elements of the assessment process with some changes, (on a one year trial basis): the assessment consists of formative reflective journaling, leading to a pass/fail summative reflective journal; alongside a graded individual presentation to the class, which attracts 100% of the mark. The assessment elements are non-aggregated, so students need to pass both in order to pass the module.

Inevitably, students in training, facing assessments are anxious to meet the assessment criteria by presenting the best and most acceptable versions of themselves. This can result in them giving what they perceive are the 'correct', rather than honest, answers to value questions and 'hiding' those areas of their personal values and their practice which they feel do not meet youth work standards. The students in this study demonstrated all of these practices. However, they were are also eager to learn: about themselves, their habits and practices as youth work practitioners, about youth work theory, values, principles and practices, and about how to implement these into their own practice. Given a safe space within the course curriculum to reflect on themselves and their practice, they did so candidly, and benefited as a result, from their own critical evaluation of themselves and their practice and from the practice of reflection they developed. They began to recognise the habits they had acquired through earlier practice that did not best serve the needs of young people and their work *with* them. Through this, they learned as much about how to work with themselves as practitioners as they did about how to work with young people. And this is how it should be. Youth work students need to '*become well versed in the reflective and deliberative processes through which they seek to support young people*' (Young, 2006:110). This is vital if they are to support young people to develop critically reflective habits which enable them to learn about themselves and life and how to take action for social justice, through the reflective and dynamic practices of youth work. As Parker Palmer (1998:2) reminded us:

> We teach who we are. Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed form this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror and not run from what I see, I have the chance to gain self-knowledge – and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject.

Work with young people has undergone significant change since the start of this investigation. The neo-liberal agenda has had a detrimental influence on state conception of education practice (Levin, 1998; Barnett & Coate, 2005) and 'youth work' (Jeffs & Smith, 2008; Davies, 2019). As a result of significant cuts, many youth services have been closed and work tendered out to third sector organisations (Unison, 2014; Puffet, 2017; Davies, 2019); youth workers are increasingly being used for behaviour management, 'resilience' work – enabling people to subsist in the current austerity climate without being a drain on the public purse (a perversion of true 'resilience' which must include 'pressing back' against that which is deforming/oppressing) – surveillance and social control of young people (de St Croix, 2009). Instead of youth work as a creative art and radical practice for social justice, negotiated *in situ* for the benefit of young people and their communities, it is being reduced to a technical practice of social conformity, shaped by and for the benefit of those far from the lives of young people. This not only impacts the practice of youth work; it can impact the 'soul' of the workers who are engaged to deliver this work (Ball, 2003)

de St Croix's (2016) research reveals that grass roots youth work is alive and well, staffed by part-time and volunteer youth workers, who work with passion and resistance. There is a potential danger for qualified youth workers seeking full-time employment in youth work, even those working in the third sector, that their work agenda would not be set by the employing organisation and determined by local need; but by those who fund the post from a distance, shaped by global interests. This is not only true for organisations that receive funding from governmental sources. Large charitable funding bodies are increasingly influenced by the ubiquitous narratives around education and young people: their grant giving, grant outcomes and monitoring serving capitalist ideologies which are of limited, if any, benefit to the young people the grants seek to help. These agendas and associated practices are then cascaded downwards into receiving organisations, where pressing local need and the desire to offer at least 'something' to young people dis-incentivises critique at an organisational level, requiring youth workers engaged on the front-line with young people

to navigate many competing agendas and pressures. In this climate of rapid change, it is vital that those of us involved in youth work, as educators and workers, do not lose sight of our values and core aims. Young people need workers who are aware of their professional values, who are sensitive to value issues and the personal, organisational, local, national and global factors that impact them. Movements and organisations, such as 'In Defence of Youth Work', the Choose Youth campaign, trade unions and local organisations are doing much to promote youth work values and practices and to push back against the co-option of youth work for non-youth work purposes (de St Croix 2016); as are the remaining youth work degree courses, despite policy pressure. Cooper (2007/8:69) asserted that youth work educators can no longer '*afford to miss the opportunity to enable students to develop strength of professional identity that affords them the courage to be creative in the face of uncertainty and change'*.

The students who took part in this research noted the importance and value of reflective and reflexive practice in their work with young people and the complex situations young people face. Students' understanding of themselves and their professional identity gave them confidence to develop their professional values and to critique organisational, local and wider social policies and global trends that were not beneficial for young people and their communities. The link between knowing self and global issues can be hard to discern, but it is an important one if youth workers are to support young people in making these links, enabling them to take their own action for justice in the world.

Appendix 1: Advocacy and Anti-Discrimination Module Outline

Course Unit Outline

Aims
This course unit will enable students to reflect critically on themselves, their values, their experiences and their work in the light of anti-oppressive theory, to work in ways which promote equality of opportunity, participation and responsibility and to consider the role of advocacy in work with young people.

Learning Outcomes
On completion of this unit successful students will be able to:

- Understand how their own experience has been shaped by their gender, ethnicity, nationality, class, age, faith, religion, ability, sexuality and socialisation.
- Be aware of the above perspectives in ordering and interpreting their experiences for themselves and others.
- Demonstrate an in depth knowledge of relevant anti-oppressive theories and practices.
- Demonstrate an ability to critically reflect on their youth work practice in the light of anti-oppressive theory and manage themselves appropriately as professional practitioners.
- Recognise, articulate and engage in a critical, reflective dialogue with and about their personal values and those of the profession.
- Learn how to recognise, explore, work with and challenge discrimination and oppression within themselves, their own practice, their placement setting and within the wider world, particularly in relation to gender, ethnicity, nationality, class, age, faith, religion, ability and sexuality.
- Understand and analyse why oppression and discrimination take place and how socialisation can cause deep-seated oppression.
- Begin to develop and implement equal opportunities and diversity policies within their own practice and within the placement setting.
- Recognise the historical presence of discrimination in, from and towards faith-based communities.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the role of advocacy in working with the oppressed.

Content
Primary focus will be on learning through reflection on experience, study, learning and personal growth. Students will be encouraged to explore:

- How their own experience has been shaped by their gender, ethnicity, faith, sexuality, class, age, ability and environment;
- Their personal values, what has shaped these and the values of the profession
- Freire's understanding of what it is to be human and how to work with oppressed people
- Tutu's exploration and outworking of what it is to be human and overcoming

oppression in South Africa
- Current theory surrounding discrimination and prejudice - Thompson, Dominelli
- Understanding of inclusion and exclusion and working in settings of unequal power, - Weber and Parkin
- Justice, Equality and Equity - Jones et al, Rawls, Volf
- Socialisation, culture and hegemony - Gramsci
- Exploring recent theory and practice around discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, race, ethnicity, sexuality and faith and relating this to Weber and Parkin
- Exploring ways of working with people which fosters equality of opportunity, respect, autonomy and human well-being.

Learning methods
The learning environment fostered in this module encourages reflection upon experience and is based upon the assumption that students are capable, autonomous adults, responsible for their own learning. This is reflected in the way seminars are managed. See attached sheet for further discussion.

The methods used are;
- Personal reflection and critical inquiry
- One-to-one reflection / discussion, within context of paired listening
- Lecturettes
- Group reflection and exercises
- Independent study, reading and research
- Reflective journalling
- Video, Film, IT input
- Placement Learning

Learning Hours

Activity	**Hours allocated**
Staff/student contact	22
Private reflection, study and reading	55.5
Reflective Journals	12.5
Presentation	10
Total Hours	**100**

Assessment

Assessment activity	**Length Required**	
10 reflective journals - reflecting on the student's learning experience in the workshops, in practice and in research and study	400	Failure to submit 10 on time will result in a fail
Presentation to tutor group – using medium of choice, with supporting notes to be given to tutor	7-10 mins	Pass / Fail

Note: The journals are mandatory and are designed to be a personal record of the learning journey and the student's experience of the workshops. As such, they will not be assessed, but failure to hand in 10 weekly journals on time will result in a fail. (See additional sheet for further information.) The presentation will be assessed on a pass / fail basis and will include student self- and peer- feedback and assessment as well as tutor assessment. (See additional sheet for further information.)

Required Study texts

Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, London: Penguin - especially Chapters 1 & 2
Tutu, D. (2005) *God has a Dream. A vision of hope for our time*. London: Rider - all of it!

Core Learning / Reference Materials

Books about or with sections on values and ethics in youth work and informal education

Banks, S. (1999) *Ethical Issues in Youth Work.* Abingdon: Routledge Chapter

Banks, S. (2001) 'Professional Values in Informal Education Work', **Chapter 5** in **Deer Richardson, L. & Wolfe, M.** *Principles and Practice of Informal Education: Learning through Life*. London: RoutledgeFalmer

Jeffs, T. & Smith, M. (2005) Informal Education:-conversation, democracy and learning. Bramcote: Educational Heritics Press – **Chapter 7**

National Youth Agency (2004) *Ethical Conduct in Youth Work.* Leicester: NYA

Young, K. (2006) The Art of Youth Work. Lyme Regis: Russell House Publishing – **Chapter 4**

Books about Anti-oppressive practice / Anti-Discrimination and ethics in social work

Banks, S. (2006) *Ethics and Values in Social Work (3rd Edition)* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Domminelli, L. (2002) *Anti-oppressive Social Work Theory and Practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan - especially **Chapters 1 & 2**

Thompson, N. (2001) *Anti-Discriminatory Practice. Third Edition*. Basingstoke: Palgrave - espcially **Chapter 2**

Books offering theory to support understanding and critical thinking in relation to oppression, equality, power and discrimination

Jones, K., Brown, J and Bradshaw, J. (1982) *Issues in Social Policy*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul - especially **Chapter 1**

Parkin, F. (1979) *Marxism and Class Theory. A bourgeois critique*. London: Tavistock

Rawls, J. (1972) *A Theory of Justice*. Clarendon Press

Volf, M. (1996) *Exclusion and Embrace. A theological exploration of identity, otherness and reconciliation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press - **Chapter 5**

Weber, M. (1991) *From Max Weber. Essays in sociology*. London: Routledge

Books on Being Human

Doctrine Commission (2003) *Being Human: A Christian Understanding of personhood illustrated with reference to power, money, sex and time.* London: Church House Publishing

Vanier, J. (2003) *Becoming Human*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd.

Plus information about specific areas of discrimination. Some reading 'tips' / reading material will be given out on a weekly basis. You will also need to source and research recent practice reports, articles, etc, relating to areas of anti-discriminatory practice. This is something we can work on together as a group.

Introduction to The Course Methodology

Discrimination, prejudice and unequal power relations are subjects which profoundly affect all of us at the very core of our humanity. Learning to work in a way that makes for human well-being - in an anti-oppressive way, within unequal relationships of power - demands not only the acquisition of knowledge, but the ability to integrate this knowledge into one's life, attitudes and practices. Learning needs to touch and change heart as well as mind (as if we can separate the two - that is a very western concept!!)

In that sense, many of the desired learning outcomes of this unit are not something that can be 'taught' by one person to another. Only the person themselves can decide to make these internal changes, to accept or reject these ways of thinking about others and the world, to choose to critically examine themselves, their thoughts and actions, to let go of one set of long-held beliefs and to take on, and work with, a new set. Such transformation is at the heart of the Christian gospel - and it does not always come easily!

For this reason, the unit and its learning methods have been designed to encourage and support students in personal reflection on their own values, attitudes and ways of working, as well as providing students with appropriate theories to enable critical thought and analysis of and changes in practice.

The methodology supports the idea that youth work, as a discipline, is a 'practice'. What do we mean by this? Aristotle argued that knowledge should be appropriate to its purpose and outlined a three-fold classification of disciplines; 'theoretical' (*epistēmē*), 'practical' (*praxis*) or 'productive' (*poiēsis*) (Aristotle 2004:146). Carr and Kemmis describe these classifications as follows:

> The purpose of a theoretical discipline is the pursuit of truth through contemplation; its *telos* [purpose] is the attainment of knowledge for its own sake. The purpose of the productive sciences is to make something; their *telos* is the production of some artifact. The practical disciplines are those sciences which deal with ethical and political life; their *telos* is practical wisdom and knowledge. (Carr & Kemmis 1986: 32, in Smith 1999)

We can understand these as the difference between studying theology or 'pure maths' (theoretical), carpentry (productive) and youth work training (practical). The way we go about studying, teaching and learning each of these disciplines requires different kinds of knowledge and approaches to education; the end purpose – the pursuit of knowledge, the production of an object, or the ability to wisely navigate difficult life decisions - determines the kind of knowledge that is appropriate.

Originally, the 'practical sciences' were associated with ethical and political life; involving working with people and making judgements. Their purpose was the cultivation of wisdom and knowledge, something I imagine we would hope to be cultivating within the young people we work with. 'Praxis' was the form of reasoning associated with the practical sciences, a term which Freire uses frequently, to mean a continual cycle of action, based on reflection, leading to further action. Smith argues that this action embodies certain qualities and is both 'informed', by reflection and knowledge, and 'committed', to human well-being, to respecting others, to the search for truth and to liberation (Smith 1999).

Youth work sits comfortably in the category of 'practical science', requiring the kind of knowledge that will enable us to make wise judgements in often complex and unique life situations. This knowledge can only be gained through 'practice' (praxis) – literally like a

musician or an athlete might practice, analyse their actions, find theory and coaching that will help them and then return to their 'practice' to implement their learning in order to improve their performance. In youth work terms, this means thinking about ourselves, and how we act, reflecting on this in the light of theory and then returning to our 'practice' to try again, in a committed and informed way which embodies certain values.

This module aims to provide a space for each of us to look carefully and honestly at both ourselves and our practice, to sit, think about, reflect on, listen to and learn from both ourselves and our practice, so that we can return to our practice more aware of ourselves and our actions, better informed, more committed and with an understanding of the values which embody our work. This level of vulnerability can appear threatening, but an understanding of who we are is essential in enabling us to begin to understand others.

As a Level 1 unit, the 'grade' for this unit does not contribute to the final academic grade at Level 3. This provides the opportunity to release students from the academic pressure of grading, in a subject in which it is, at best, challenging to grade student learning and development.

However, working in an anti-discriminatory way is not only foundational to the values of youth work, but to the Christian Gospel and many other religions also. In order for students to be considered 'competent to practice' and to gain the unit credits, they must demonstrate both their commitment to the practice, evidenced by their participation in and commitment to the course and the learning group; and their ability to work in an anti-discriminatory way. Youth work is a professional practice and the profession determines what is appropriate professional practice through discussion, dialogue and reflection within the **community of practice**. One cannot be a 'professional youth work practitioner' in isolation. The seminar sessions are not about passing on information/knowledge – which a student could find on their own – but are about working together in a community of practice to support each others' learning in a way which is appropriate to the profession. This is why attendance at class is prioritized in this module.

Therefore, the requirements for passing the course and gaining the unit credits are based on the following criteria;

1. **Attendance at the workshops - Attendance at the workshops is considered of highest priority in this module.**
    - Absence from one class is allowable (but not recommended) within college guidelines;
    - Absence from two classes will require further work of 1,000 words to evidence the work missed in class, in addition to all other module requirements.
    - Absence from three classes is only allowable under exceptional circumstances and will require a 2,500 word essay, in addition to all other module requirements.
    - Absence from four classes will result in a fail.
    - Any absence must be requested/negotiated in advance, except in the case of emergency or sudden illness, where notification as soon as possible after the class is required.

2. **Submission of ten reflective journals, minimum 400 words, by the deadlines shown in the Module timetable**. These are required whether or not you attend the associated workshop. They are not an assessed piece of work and will not be 'marked' or judged, but will be carefully read by the tutor.
   Failure to submit journals on time, will result
   - in the first instance, with a warning;
   - in the second, with a requirement to submit extra work;
   - in the third instance, with a fail.

   Journals can be submitted by email to [redacted] by the agreed deadline and I will email you by return, to confirm I have received them. If you don't get a receipt, it is your responsibility to follow this up with me. If you cannot submit a journal by the due date / time, it is your responsibility to negotiate this with me beforehand.

3. **Assessment through presentation**, using a medium of student's own choice, lasting a minimum of 7 minutes a maximum of 10 mins, demonstrating that the student can;
   - reflect on their youth work practice in the light of anti-oppressive theory and practice; and
   - work in an anti-discriminatory way, which promotes human well-being, equality of opportunity, participation and responsibility.
   - The presentation will be assessed using self-, peer- and tutor evaluation and feedback. Students will pass if they demonstrate competency as outlined in point 3 above.

   In order to be eligible for the assessment, students must have submitted ten journals within the word and time parameters laid out above and have attended the appropriate number of workshops.

One-to One Reflective Learning

Carl Rogers contentiously said:

> Anything that can be taught to another is relatively inconsequential and has little or no significant influence on behaviour. ..... [the] only learning which significantly influences behaviour is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning....[which] cannot be directly communicated to another. (Rogers in Schon 1987:89)

I encourage you to reflect on his statement in two respects; the truth (or otherwise) of it in our own lives and how we feel about this as professional informal educators.

If it is true, that it is only we ourselves who can appropriate for ourselves truly significant learning, then this says something about the way we work to teach and foster learning, within others and ourselves.

The core learning method used in this unit will be one which will offer you space to reflect upon who you are, what you are learning and appropriate it for yourselves. I hope it will offer you the opportunity to develop two key skills, skills which I consider are vital for reflective, anti-discriminatory practice.

The first is listening; listening to yourself, to another and to God and his Spirit, living within you. Listening is an exceptionally undervalued skill or attribute, in fact I think I prefer to call it an art, because it is not passive or technical, but dynamic and creative. We are taught to

speak, to present, to preach, to explain, but very rarely to listen.

We frequently listen in very superficial ways, which mean we don't really hear what others say and are often ourselves left feeling unheard or misunderstood by others who don't listen properly to us. Kay Lindahl, a teacher and writer on listening, notes that we are inundated with poor examples of listening, that we are constantly interrupting each other, eager to input our own point of view and to be listened to. Even when we are not speaking, but supposedly listening to someone, she suggests we maybe busy at the computer, or washing up, or working our what we want to say next. In fact, Lindahl values listening so highly, she calls it a 'sacred art', and reminds us that it is a feature of many mature spiritual practices, both in the Christian tradition and in others. She writes;

> [Listening] takes intention and commitment. We need to slow down to expand our awareness of the possibilities of deep listening. The simple act of listening can transform all our relationships. Indeed it can transform the world, as we practice the change we want to see in the world. Listening is the first step in making people valued. (Lindahl 2004:2,4)

Lindahl describes this kind of transformative listening as *choice, gift* and *art*. We need to make a deliberate *choice* to engage in this kind of attentive listening. Attentive listening is a *gift* we give to someone and it is an *art* that we need to practice and master. She identifies three foundational qualities of listening; *silence*, which she says is a pre-requisite of the contemplative listening practice associated with prayer and listening to God, *reflection*, which she describes as listening inwardly, to ourselves and *presence*, which is the ability to 'be fully present' with someone, to give ourselves completely to listening to them without distraction. I find these both helpful and challenging ways to think about listening.

So part of the module design is to help us practice the art of deep, attentive listening, to give ourselves and other plenty of space to listen to ourselves, to others and to God. The second attribute I hope the module method will foster is of reflective, critical thinker. The method will give you the chance, supported by an attentive listener, to think through arguments, to postulate theories, to continue a train of thought without interruption or fear of being shouted down, to express what is going on for you in a climate of acceptance. Somewhat ironically, the flip-side of our not listening carefully and always rushing to speak, is a poverty in our ability to think coherently and progressively.

In his article on one-to-one learning, David Potts quotes Jerome Liss as follows:

> People in their daily lives are too often interrupted and not permitted to complete their thoughts. Direct interruptions, meaning one person speaks while the other is still talking, can block one talker's mind if he does not finish his say....Repetitive interruptions not only chop up the ongoing stream of thoughts and feelings of the moment, but the two-person pattern is internalised and repeated by the interrupted person's mind when alone. Thus, people who feel 'blocked', 'stuck', 'bogged down' or 'hemmed in' have been stopped by others from unravelling their thoughts and feelings and are plagued by self-interrupted thoughts when alone. (Liss, in Potts 1981:95)

Potts goes on to observe that traditional academic discussions offer:

> some chance for a fruitful clash of competing ideas already formed, but not for careful and individual development of ideas. In my experience, students who are trying to work up their ideas are quickly attacked on any weaknesses, weaknesses they could have corrected themselves given more space. They become frustrated and defensive and few I think try to work it all out. (Potts: *ibid*)

He developed a method of one-to-one learning, borrowed from co-counselling, which offers the learner space to process and reflect on experience and to formulate and work through new ideas in a supportive and affirming environment. Students are paired up and face each other. They each have an equal time space to work through a question without interruption, whilst the other listens attentively. The roles are then reversed. This pattern is repeated a number of times and then partners swap.

This isn't necessarily an easy method to use well to begin with, from either perspective. As the speaker, it encourages us to think through ideas coherently and persistently, to critically assess our own thinking, to find the strengths and weaknesses in it, and to learn to ask ourselves further questions in order to move on our thinking. These are not things we are generally practiced at. As the listener, we are encouraged firstly and most importantly not to interrupt, to put our own ideas and thinking to one side in order to give our full attention to someone else. Sadly, we are often not very practiced at this either. This method encourages us to be still and listen carefully, without distraction. Controlling our innate desire to interrupt and say "... but have you thought of this?" takes lots of discipline - but it is a great discipline to have and one which I hope we will all work on, and encourage each other in, together.

When starting out, it is helpful to remember that you are not engaged in a discussion - each of us is, in one sense, working for ourselves, both to learn to think better and to listen more deeply. Your partner's time to speak is his or her own and they may use it well or poorly (in your estimation!), but equally it is also your time to develop the *art* of listening by *choice* and to give your time listening attentively as a *gift*. But equally, *your* time is *your* own, and you each have the choice to use it well or poorly, regardless of what your partner has done. And of course, we can each provide a service to our partners by our own self-improvement and good example. This is all part of the process of learning to take responsibility for our own learning and ourselves.

It is not uncommon for people to struggle when beginning this way of working, as it utilises skills we are often not schooled in. You may love the freedom or hate the freedom, feel really happy about the methods, or really frustrated. This is where the journals come in…..

Journals

Journals are an integral part of the student self-directed learning and one-to-one reflection methods being used in 'teaching' this unit. They are intended to complement the workshop experience, by enabling you to further reflect on your experiences in the workshops, to consolidate your learning by putting it into words, to develop your writing skills and finally, to give feedback to the tutor on what is going on for you both in the workshops and in the rest of your study, reflection and learning throughout this unit.

The journals are intended to give you free range to explore your personal and professional learning and growth in this area. As we have reflected earlier, anti-discrimination is a 'practice', not simply an academic subject. The journals are an opportunity to reflect upon this learning journey and the tensions, frustrations, joy and pain this may cause you, with others and with yourself. For that reason they will not be graded. The requirement is simply that they are written and handed in. I hope you can evidence your commitment to the learning process through using the journals to explore and reflect on your experiences and

learning, but as they are not going to be graded, you are at liberty to use them as you wish!

The journals also give you the opportunity to reflect upon the one-to-one method being used in the workshops and how you are able to work with it, and to vent your feelings about it! Acknowledging how we feel about something can often be the beginning of significant learning.

I will read the journals carefully and with great interest. (They can be much more interesting and illuminating than essays!) I hope that they will give me a sense of what is going on for each of you so I can better plan the work to support your learning. But, I will not 'mark' them or judge them. If you would like to discuss anything within your learning journals, I am very willing to do this. Perhaps I should say at this stage that, due to the fact that we are engaged in work with children and young people, the only circumstance in which I would need to contact you about the content of a journal is if it includes discussion of a child protection issue or serious breach of professional practice.

The journals are not expected to be long pieces of academic work, (although you may want to refer to the theory you have been reading). They are meant to be a diary on your experiences, learning, study and personal growth during the course. They should take approximately 1 hour to write and this time has been allocated within the 100 hours for this unit's study. Please make sure you keep a copy of your journals for yourself, as I hope they will be very useful in helping you prepare your presentation.

On a practical tip, you can email journals to me at [redacted] and I will email you by return to confirm I have received them. Please note the deadline carefully. As I respect your adulthood and autonomy, I will hold you to the boundaries we agree! You may find it easier to write the journal in a word document, then you can easily keep track of how many words you have written.
You may find that writing the journals comes easily to you. If not, you won't be alone! But the discipline of writing them regularly should bring improvements and the reward of record of your own growth and development of skills. Just to remind you - the journals are a requirement for passing the unit, even though they do not carry an academic mark.

Hints on Writing Journals
Some suggestion on what you could write about...

- Write for yourself, be honest and make it useful to you.
- Write about your experiences in the workshops, how you found the exercises and paired working.
- Reflect on what you are leaning about yourself; does this surprise you?
- Reflect on your feelings and why you think you felt this way.
- Write about things that interest you, puzzle you, make you excited or confused.
- Write about anything you have read which has struck a chord with you or made you angry.
- Write about what you are learning and how this is affecting your youth work.
- Write about any tensions you feel between your personal values and beliefs, what you are learning, your understanding of youth work's values, society's values and the 'received' doctrines of your religious faith.

Aristotle (2004) *The Nicomachean Ethics.* London: Penguin

Carr, W. & Kemmis, S. (1986) 'Becoming Critical. Education, knowledge and action research' Lewes: Falmer Press quoted in Smith, M. (1999). 'Knowledge' *the encyclopaedia of informal education, http://www.infed.org/biblio/knowledge.htm* [Accessed February 18, 2009].

Lindahl, K. (2004) *Practising the Sacred Art of Listening*. Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications

Potts, D. (1981) *One-to-one Learning,* in Boud, D. (ed) *Developing Student Autonomy in Learning*. London: Kegan Page

Schon, D A. (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, London: Jossey Bass

Smith, M. (1999). 'praxis' *the encyclopaedia of informal education, http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-praxis.htm* [Accessed January 24, 2010].

The Presentation

Due to the competency based nature of the degree - that you also stand to receive a JNC qualification, attesting to your ability to work at an appropriate professional level with young people and to manage other staff and volunteers - it is necessary to assess your ability to: reflect on your youth work practice in the light of anti-oppressive theory and practice; and to work in an anti-discriminatory way, which promotes human well-being, equal opportunity, respect, participation and responsibility.

The presentation is the one piece of assessed work in this course. In order to pass, you must demonstrate your commitment and ability to work in an anti-discriminatory way, relating theory to your practice. You may choose whichever medium you like to do this. You could simply read some of the material from your journals, if you feel it demonstrates your competence. You might like to make or create something as the basis of your presentation, which you feel reflects your learning journey and evidences your competence. You might like to use something that others have done, as the basis for your presentation, which to you reflects your learning and evidences your abilities.

Presentations should be between 7-10 minutes long and you may use whatever medium you like for your presentation, with supporting notes to be given to the me, the tutor. The key points (to state them again), are that you demonstrate your learning and your ability to reflect on your own practice in the light of anti-oppressive theory and that you evidence your competence to work in an anti-discriminatory way, which promotes human well-being, equal opportunity, respect, participation and responsibility.

Self Assessment

The presentation should also include your own assessment as to whether you have passed or failed this unit. Returning to Carl Roger's thoughts on learning, I, as 'tutor', might know what I hope to have 'taught' or fostered within you during the course, but only you will know what you have learned. This means, if you are able to think honestly and openly about your practice and your learning journey, and you understand the assessment criteria, you are actually the best person to assess whether you have passed or failed the unit!

However, in order for others to agree with your assessment of yourself, and for the Nazarene

College, the NYA and the University of Manchester to give you their backing, you have to provide evidence for your assertion, and this is what your fellow students, myself and the second marker will be assessing. Alongside your self-assessment, your fellow students will provide feedback on your presentation and will offer their assessment as to whether you have provided adequate evidence to meet the unit criteria. As tutor, I too will do the same. You may believe you are competent and should pass the unit, and you may well be, but if you haven't demonstrated this and provided evidence for it within your presentation, then others will not be able to affirm you in your assessment. If there is significant disagreement in the process to warrant concern, then the student and tutor will meet to discuss the issues and along with the second marker, will come to a decision.

If you have any concerns or queries about the unit, please do come and talk with me.

Assessment Method & Criteria ST170

Method
Demonstration through a presentation using a medium of student's own choice, that the student can; reflect on their youth work practice in the light of anti-oppressive theory and practice; and work in an anti-discriminatory way, which promotes human well-being, equality of opportunity, participation and responsibility.

Aims
This course unit will enable students to reflect on their work in the light of anti-oppressive theory, to work in ways which promote equality of opportunity, participation and responsibility and to consider the role of advocacy in work with young people.

Learning Outcomes
As above

Assessment Criteria
Students will need to demonstrate their ability in the following areas at an appropriate level of competence;

The student should demonstrate:

KNOWLEDGE OF SELF

- an understanding of themself and their values and how they affect their thinking and their work

ABILITY TO WORK WITH SELF & OTHERS

- their ability to recognise, understand and use appropriately the power they have as youth ministers / workers/ informal educators / adults
- that they
    - are thoughtful and caring practitioners,
    - are willing and able to listen to themselves and others,
    - are willing and able to engage in dialogue,
    - can explore and work with their own and others' attitudes and values
    - and are open to having their own views challenged and changed

ABILITY TO RELATE THEORY TO PRACTICE & WORK APPROPRIATELY

- an understanding of appropriate theory and ability to relate it to actual situations
- that this theory affects their practice appropriately in relation to (one or more) specific situations
- their ability to recognize and analyse situations of unequal power in youth work and wider situations and their ability to respond appropriately

A COMMITMENT TO PLANNING AND MANAGING THEIR ONGOING LEARNING IN THE FUTURE

- their capacity to identify their strengths and weaknesses and areas for future learning and growth in regard to anti-oppressive practice

Appendix 2: Critical Incident Questionnaire

Critical Incident Questionnaire: Advocacy & Anti-Discrimination 10

Please take about 5 minutes to respond to each of the questions below about this week's class. Don't put your name on the form – your responses are anonymous. When you have finished writing, put one copy of the form on the table by the door and keep the other copy for yourself. At the start of the next class, I will be sharing the responses with the group. Thanks for taking the time to do this. What you write will help me make the class more responsive to your concerns. Thanks, Helen.

1. At what moment in the class this week were you most engaged with what was happening?

2. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most distanced from what was happening?

3. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most affirming and helpful?

4. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most puzzling or confusing?

5. What about the class this week surprised you the most? (This could be something about your own reactions to what went on, or something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you.)

taken from Brookfield, S. (1995) Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher San Francisco: Jossey Bass

Appendix 3: Case Study Ethical Scenario

Case Study Ethical Scenario, used in Interviews

While out on a trip with a group of young people, a youth worker saw one of the participants, a young woman, stealing sweets from a shop. Nobody else seemed to have noticed. The young woman had recently returned to the youth club after a long absence and her behaviour was often challenging. The worker felt she was just beginning to develop a relationship of trust with the young woman, and therefore decided not to mention the theft. Afterwards the worker wondered if she had done the right thing, knowing that: 'by not mentioning the incident, I was condoning the theft and passing on the value that it was acceptable'.

From Banks, S. (2010:3) *Ethical Issues in Youth Work*. London: Routledge

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